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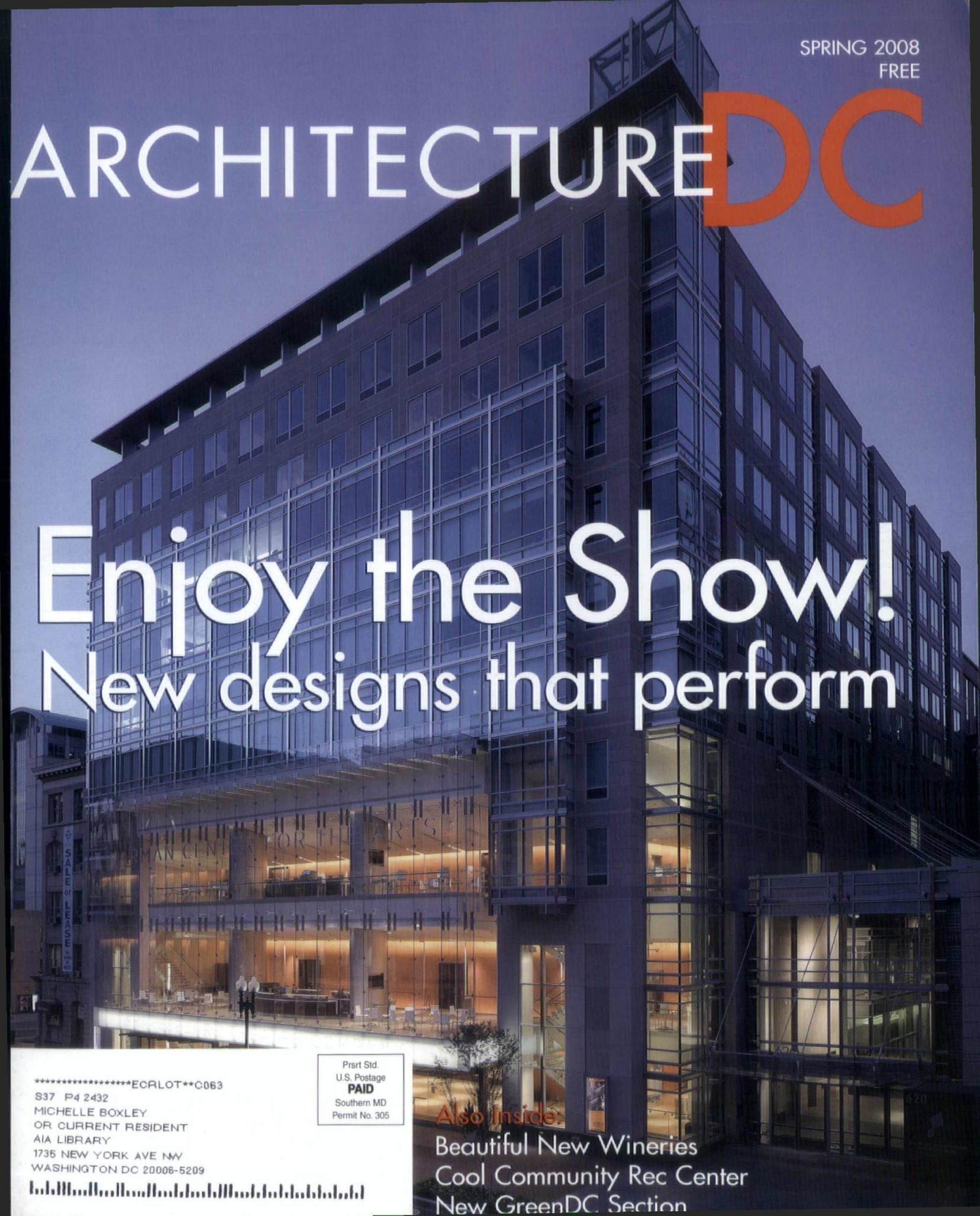

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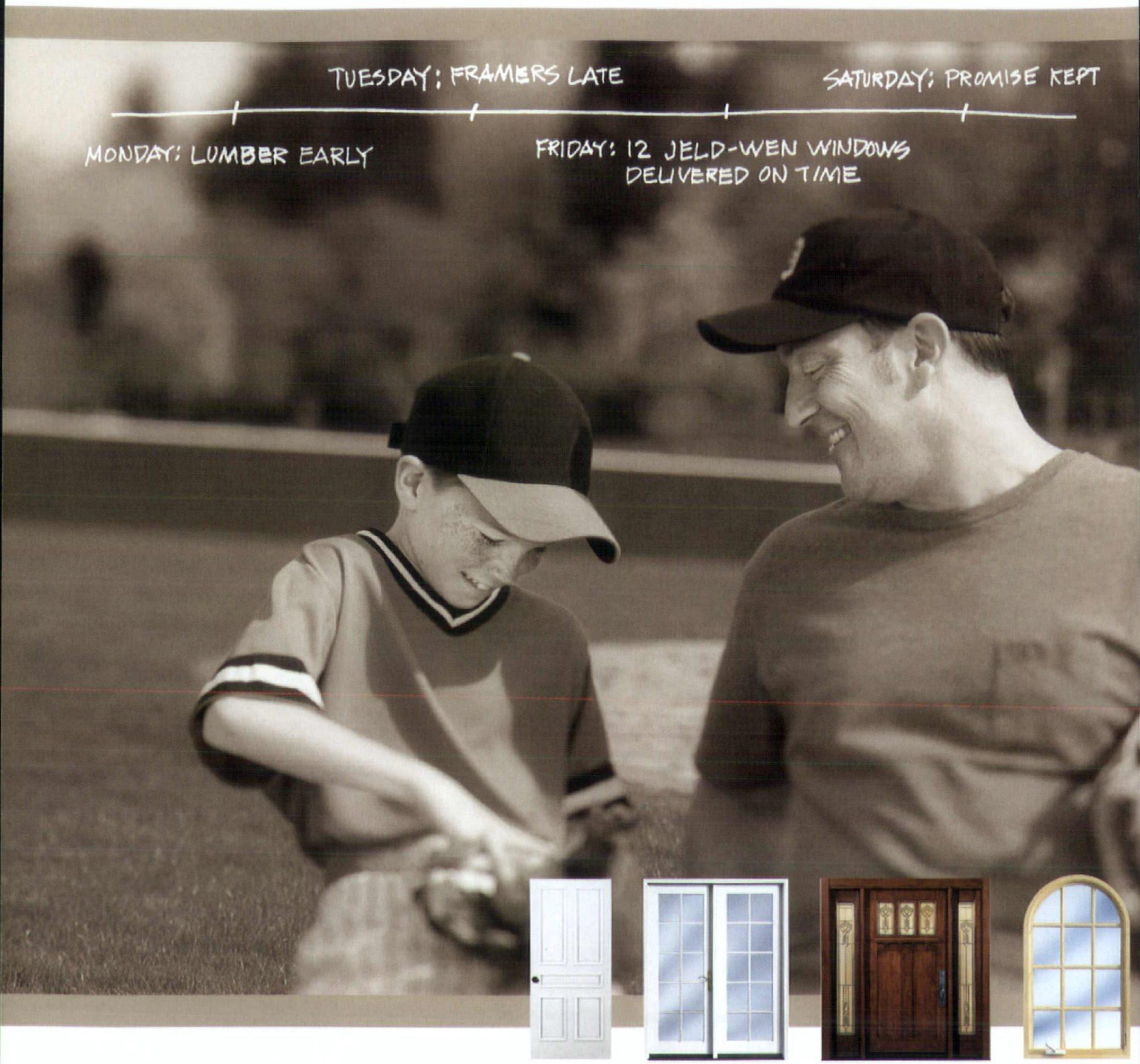

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Photo by Michael Moran

Corridor outside lab theaters at Atlas Performing Arts Center, by CORE architecture + design.

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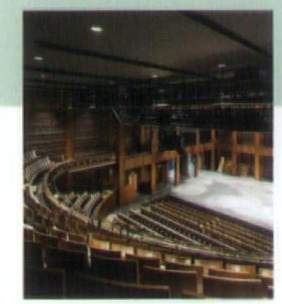

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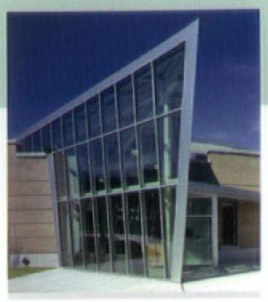

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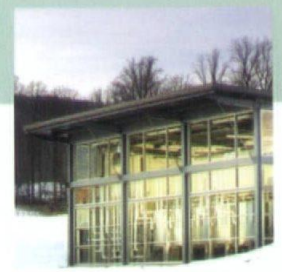

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ON THE COVER: Main façade of the building that houses the Shakespeare Theatre Company's new Sidney Harman Hall, along with the headquarters of the International Union of Bricklayers and Allied Craftworkers
Photo by Prakash Patel
Cover design by Ronald O'Rourke

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WHAT A DIFFERENCE TEN YEARS MAKE

David Hamilton

This year marks my 10th anniversary with AIA | DC. We've seen some big changes in the Washington architecture market in those years. Just look at how many international architects now have projects in the Washington area, or more importantly, look at how many of our local members now practice internationally.

Another significant change in the last 10 years for the Chapter is the birth and rapid growth of this magazine. It's a showcase for the wealth of talent here in the DC region, and one that has a wide reach. Before we started the magazine we were lucky if we could get 100 people to one of our architecture exhibits or forums on how to work with an architect. With the magazine (and its web alter ego) we can now reach more than 20,000 people per issue. I'm proud, too, that we are not just a shelter magazine; along with housing, we show offices, libraries, gorgeous interiors, and landscapes. In this issue, for example, you are going to see an array of theaters, wineries, a recreation center, and a new green gallery space. No other magazine covers DC architecture the way we do.

Welcome!

Another important thing I've learned in the past 10 years is how much our readers care about architecture. Architects sometimes feel unappreciated, but the success of this magazine and architecture-related programs at the National Building Museum and the Corcoran Gallery of Art show that this is an area that is strongly interested in design and hungry for more.

I'm also proud that we shift our focus occasionally to meet reader interest. In this issue, as a matter of fact, we inaugurate a new department—**GreenDC**—which will cover a sustainable product or project that we find particularly compelling. This first installment tells the story of a small project in Bethesda that is likely to have a big impact. In addition, some of you have asked for more issues and features on our website. By the time you read the Summer 2008 issue, we will have all that and more in place on an enhanced platform.

And finally, one of the most important things I've learned is that the more things change, the more they *keep* changing. Computer modeling, for instance, is changing the way architects practice in a profound way. As a Chapter and as a magazine, we will need to respond to that. It's exciting to be involved in a profession that is grappling with change. Whatever the practice may look like in the future, one truth remains: Architects are intensely clever problem-solvers who can change the world. I look forward to being part of the future of the Chapter and am truly thankful for the last 10 years.

As always, we love to hear from you. Please let us know what you think about this issue and we welcome your suggestions for new stories and future issues.

Mary Fitch, AICP, Hon. AIA
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L. Catherine Hader ("Fine Wine in a Beautiful Box" and "Red Red Barns") writes often for *ARCHITECTURE**DC***. She is vice president and director of marketing for **DMJM Design** in Arlington.

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Ronald O'Rourke ("Not Just Another Red Brick Box") is a regular contributor to *ARCHITECTURE**DC***.

Steven M. Reiss, AIA ("Theaters Designs That Perform," "Two-Part Harman(y)," and "A Theatrical Enigma") is former chairman of HNTB Architecture. This issue marks his first contribution to *ARCHITECTURE**DC***.

Elaboration

One of our readers felt we were remiss in not identifying the person who created the light sculpture that hangs in the atrium at 1875 Pennsylvania Avenue shown on the cover of our previous issue. The sculpture is called "Fluent Traces" and was created by **Kendall Buster.**

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Greater Goods • Vivi • Distinctive Bookbinding and Leather Designs

by Denise Liebowitz

From compost bins and biodegradable lights to plastic bag dryers and rain collection barrels, Daniel Velez offers an eclectic array of eco-conscious products at his new store on U Street. **Greater Goods** opened in November catering to Washington homeowners and apartment dwellers who want to do their part for the environment. Take a walk on the wild side with one of the store's best selling items: Feet First door mats. These are super-durable indoor/outdoor floor mats that reproduce some of the world's great manhole covers. Made from recycled truck tires, these mats bring plenty of street style to your home for only $24. Greater Goods can recommend plumbers and electricians to install their solar tubes, electricity monitors, and other high-tech equipment to help keep your carbon footprint in check. Visit them at **1626 U Street, NW; (202) 449-6070; www.greatergoods.com.**

Hip, sleek, and affordable, **Vivi,** a home furnishings shop on Bethesda Row, offers contemporary lighting, furniture, and tabletop wares in a gallery-like setting. Vivi is especially strong in elegant, but fresh-looking dinnerware. The slightly asymmetrical, handcrafted plates, bowls, and lamps from Alex Marshall Studios are especially appealing and come in an array of scrumptious colors with names like butter cream and sea foam. A set of five nesting bowls, one of the store's top-selling wedding gifts, costs $362. All of the Alex Marshall ceramic dinnerware is lead-free, microwaveable, dishwasher safe, and can be warmed in the oven. Vivi's Web site is a popular bridal registry resource for online patrons around the country. **7254 Woodmont Avenue, Bethesda, Maryland; (301) 656-5627; www.vivionline.com.**

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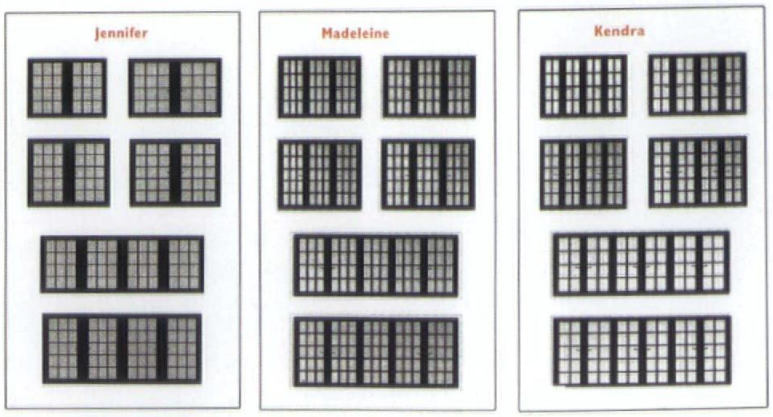

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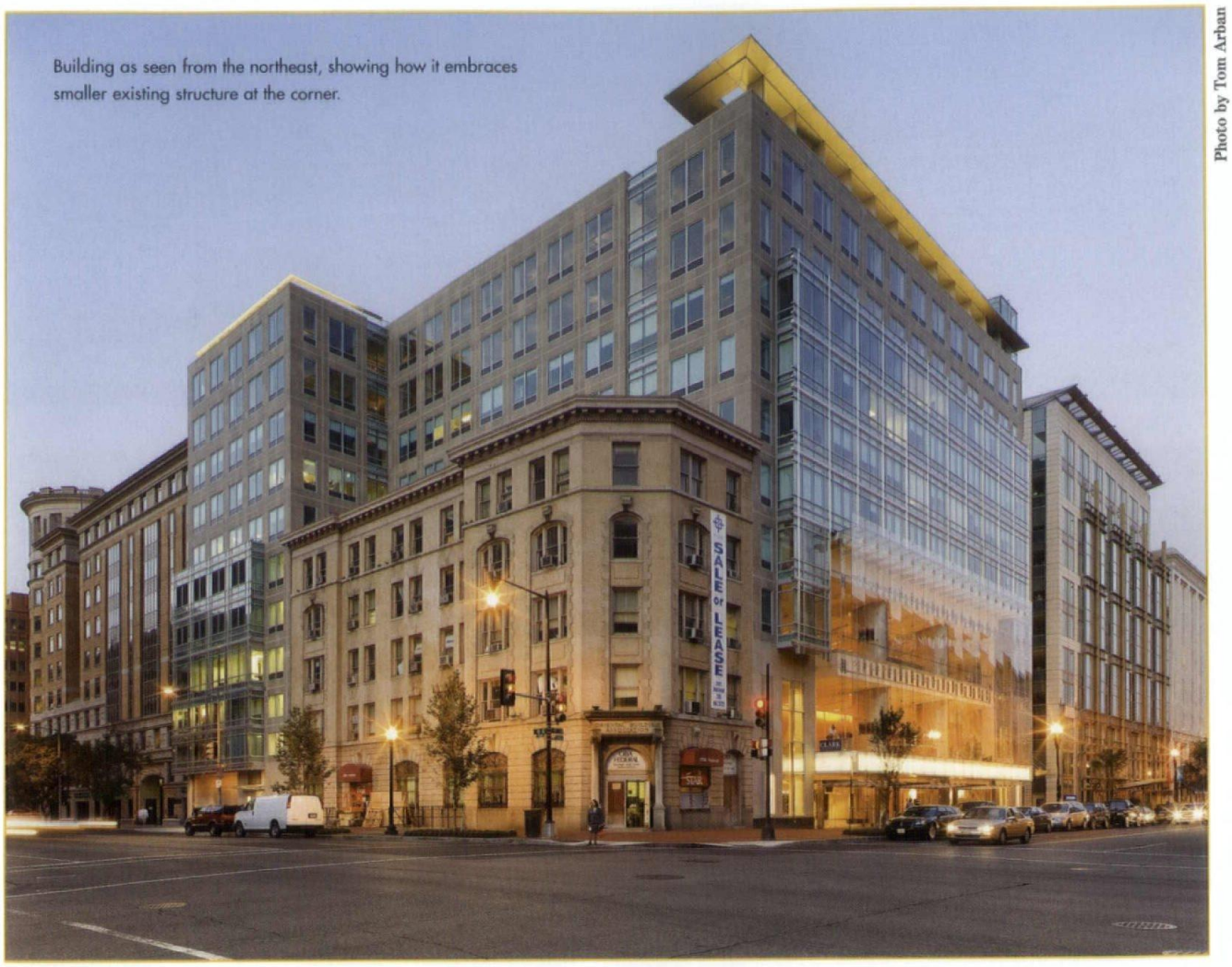
Theater Designs That Perform

By Steven M. Reiss, AIA

Marcel Proust once wrote, "The real voyage of discovery consists not in seeking new landscapes but in having new eyes."

The benefits of "new eyes" have never been more apparent than in the recent designs for the Woolly Mammoth Theatre and the Sidney Harman Hall of the Shakespeare Theatre Company, both in Washington's downtown East End. It is perhaps without precedent in the city's recent architectural history that homes for two new major theaters have been created within blocks of each other, designed by two internationally recognized architects: One intimately familiar with DC but new to theater design, and one very well versed in theater design but tackling his first commission in Washington. **Mark McInturff, FAIA,** of McInturff Architects, and **Jack Diamond, OC, FRAIC, CIP, OAA, ARIBA, Hon. FAIA, MCIP, MAIP,** of Diamond + Schmitt (working in conjunction with the Washington office of SmithGroup), respectively, have brought new perspectives and as a result, two completely new performing arts venues to the 7th Street arts district. Separated by only a few short city blocks, the two theaters followed different design paths but both have created new and magical spaces. One is internal to an office complex, barely visible from the street, and the other is fully visible and an active part of the F Street corridor. The architects shared a strong commitment to the creation of unique urban spaces. The differences between the two solutions are quickly apparent but the similarities in terms of design process and the creation of spaces that reflect their respective performance philosophies are intriguing.



Building as seen from the northeast, showing how it embraces smaller existing structure at the corner.

Photo by Tom Arban

Two-Part Harman(y)

A Theater and Office Building Connect with Each Other and with the City

by Steven M. Reiss, AIA

The opening of a new performance venue in the District of Columbia is reason enough to celebrate. When such a facility is also cleverly integrated into a new office building and designed in a way that actively supports a broader neighborhood revitalization, then its opening becomes an extraordinary occasion.

To create the hybrid building that houses the Shakespeare Theatre Company's Sidney Harman Hall and the offices of the International Union of Bricklayers and Allied Craftworkers (BAC), two architecture firms—**Diamond + Schmitt Architects Inc.** (DSAI) and **SmithGroup**—came together in a complex but ultimately rewarding collaboration. The finished project excels on many different levels: first, as a state-of-the-art theater (designed by DSAI) that allows for a remarkably wide variety of performance types; second, as an office building (by SmithGroup) that provides a distinguished headquarters for a major trade union; and finally, as a prominent addition to a burgeoning arts and entertainment district.

Main theater entrance marquee.

A Convergence of Uses

The new project was shaped by a variety of external forces. The base building was conceived as the final development on the block bounded by 6th, 7th, E, and F Streets, NW, for which Kohn Pedersen Fox Architects (KPF) of New York had prepared a master plan in the late 1980s while designing the AARP headquarters at the block's southeast corner. One of the key elements of KPF's master plan was an arcade extending from E to F Streets—an unexpected amenity in densely developed Washington, but also a feature that would present unusual

Drawing courtesy of SmithGroup

Drawing of 600 block of F Street (south side), showing alignments of major elements among various buildings' facades.

Photo by Tom Arban

Theater, showing wood acoustical panels along side walls and flexible stage.

Photo by Prakash Patel

Main lobby of BAC offices.

Shakespeare Theatre L

challenges and opportunities for both the developers and the architects of the building slated for the last vacant site on the block. Moreover, the city's overlay plan for the Downtown Development District, intended to make this rejuvenated neighborhood as lively and diverse as possible, required that the new structure include some kind of arts facility.

As it happened, while plans were being developed for the vacant site, the Shakespeare Theatre Company, housed in the nearby Lansburgh Theatre, was looking for space to expand its operations. The theater company asked JM Zell Partners, a commercial real estate consulting firm, to help the organization identify a second venue in the immediate vicinity for additional performance space. It was Zell who orchestrated the unlikely marriage between the theater and the BAC, though Bob Carr, whose firm Carr Realty Partners had developed the Terrell Place project on the same block, says that he had long thought the remaining site would be the perfect spot for a new Shakespeare Theatre Company facility.

The architects soon went to work on the difficult task of designing a single structure housing two unrelated uses while allowing each major component to retain its own identity. The result is a building that is visually cohesive despite having two distinct entrances and circulation patterns. The entry to the BAC's offices is from the arcade that derived from the original KPF master plan for the block, while the theater's public entrance is directly from F Street. The primary public face of the building is thus the theater, which is appropriate and serves to make Sidney Harman Hall—named in honor of its major benefactor—a worthy flagship facility for the Shakespeare Theatre Company. The company continues to use the existing Lansburgh Theatre as well, and together, the two facilities constitute the newly christened Harman Center for the Arts.

A State-of-the-Art Performance Space

The 2004 competition for the design of the theater itself attracted international attention resulting in interviews with four firms including DSAI, which is based in Toronto, Canada, and was already well known for performance facilities. In recalling the interview process, Michael Kahn, artistic director for the Shakespeare Theatre Company,

Photo by Tom Arban

Photo by Tom Arban

Theater lobby.

said he felt that design principal **Jack Diamond, Hon. FAIA,** brought three strong characteristics to the project: receptiveness to the challenge of creating a theater of unmatched flexibility, substantial experience and even a personal interest in theater design (Diamond's architecture school thesis involved performance halls and acoustics), and a high level of excitement about the project.

A clear concept of the theater and its sense of place evolved over many discussions between the architect and the artistic director. Kahn told Diamond that he did not want to imitate the Globe, the original Elizabethan-era theater in which many of Shakespeare's works premiered, but rather was looking for a Shakespearean theater for the 21st century. As for Diamond, he was focused from the start "on making the theater a social occasion."

Jennifer Mallard, Intl. Assoc. AIA, DSAI's project architect for Harman Hall, was involved with the design implementation of the project practically from its start over four years ago through its opening in October of last year. Mallard said that "experts often describe theaters as one of the most technically difficult buildings to design." Looking back on the project, she marvels at the degree of coordination required both within the design team and during construction.

Meeting Kahn's goal of maximum flexibility required a delicate balance between function and aesthetics. Theater design consultants Fisher Dachs Associates programmed the new venue to allow for a wide variety of staging configurations for drama—including proscenium, thrust, semi-arena, or bare stage arrangements—as well as for the presentation of dance and musical events. The space can be transformed from one configuration to another within a matter of hours. Kahn explains, "Yes, the new Sidney Harman Hall is an extension of the Shakespeare Theatre Company, a theater that can be transformed for the classics, so that the artists [rather than the architects] could interpret the setting. It is a stage that could even be used without anything on it."

The theater, with a capacity of 775, also needed to be able to accommodate the divergent acoustical requirements of speech, drama, and musical performances. The Talaske Group, acoustic consultants, began by designing a flexible acoustical curtain system. Curtains behind the screens can be manipulated to support the different types of performance without altering the shape or character of

Photo by Prakash Patel

Arcade, which also serves as main entrance to BAC offices.

Corner of main façade, with arcade at right.

the room. The auditorium's columns and balcony fronts are sandblasted, which further helps to diffuse sound waves. Most important, the theater's structure is isolated from that of the overall building, thereby providing protection from outside noise.

Integration of the Theater and Offices

The initial plan for the building called for locating the BAC office entrance directly off of F Street. The theater would be accessed through a side entrance, and the hall itself would have been positioned parallel to the street. The architects soon realized that there were two problems with this arrangement: it would require that the office building elevator core be split, forcing users to take one elevator up to the theater level and transfer to another for the higher office building floors, and it would give the theater only minimal visual identity and connection with the street and the city. Diamond suggested that the theater entrance be moved to the F Street facade, that the theater hall be turned at a right angle to the street, and that the office building be accessed from the side.

C. Andrew Rollman, AIA, LEED AP, SmithGroup's vice-president and design principal for the project, took this idea and ran with it. He and his team devised a new scheme in which the office building would be entered from the arcade—an airy, 125-foot-long space that now serves as a pleasant winter garden and has already become a preferred location for BAC's special events. Additionally, SmithGroup incorporated a glowing glass tower into the corner of the office building adjacent to the arcade. The tower provides a simple, elegant icon while also calling gentle attention to the office's entrance.

SmithGroup reduced the apparent scale of the building and simultaneously created greater visual interest by means of a layered façade. The first, background plane is primarily sheathed in French limestone with punched windows, the second is a stainless-steel-and-glass curtain wall projecting four feet, and the third, projecting even further, is an ultra-minimalist box of structural glass that serves as a marquee for the theater while also providing a degree of protection from inclement weather for pedestrians at the street level. Rollman credits David Maloney, the State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) for the District of Columbia, with beneficial involvement and guidance during the early stages of the façade design phases. While some people might be surprised by the prominent use of limestone, rather than brick, on the building that houses the offices of the International Union of Bricklayers and Allied Craftworkers, that choice was purposeful, according to Rollman. "The BAC did not want a brick facade. Since their organization represents a full range of trades, including stone masons, they saw an opportunity to highlight [another] material."

The final design allows a high degree of transparency for the theater entrance and the public spaces directly

Photo by Prakash Patel

above it, thereby enlivening the streetscape and creating a sense of event whenever there is a performance. At the same time, the BAC office entrance enjoys its own transparency, thanks to the glass arcade, allowing it to hold its own without competing with the public entrance to the theater.

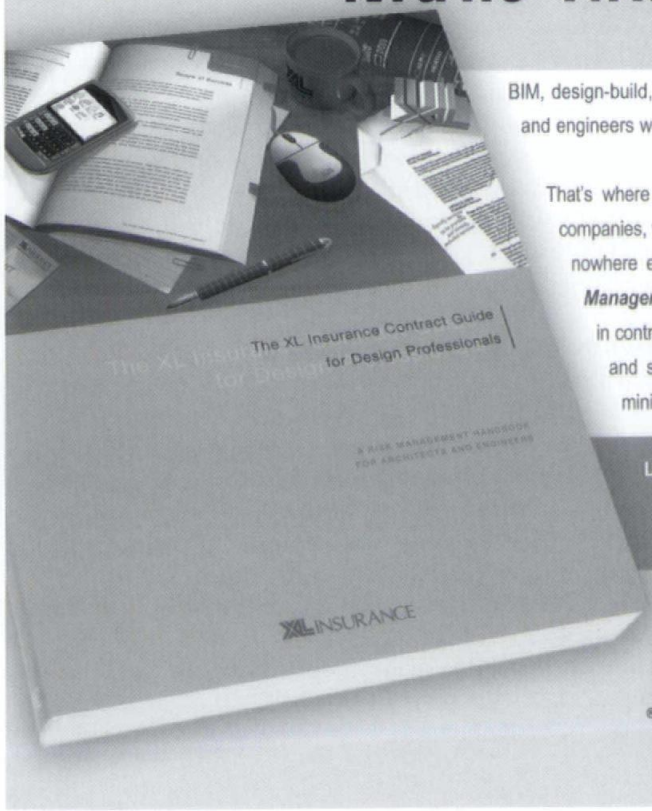
Integration of the Project with the City

Smithgroup's design expertly reinforces the building's architectural context and integrates the building deftly into the burgeoning F Street corridor. According to Rollman, "The F Street facade forms the modern counterpart to the classical portico of the newly rehabilitated Smithsonian Reynolds Center [which houses both the National Portrait Gallery and the Smithsonian American Art Museum] just to the west." Moreover, he said, the theater "adds another great venue to the cultural activity at the center point of F Street along L'Enfant's vista from Daniel Burnham's Union Station to Robert Mills's Treasury Building. This is exactly what Washington's current city planners had envisioned in their Comprehensive Plan for a livable, downtown neighborhood with exciting retail, great arts and entertainment choices, and careful historic preservation of some of the most important buildings in the city."

The facade design, in particular, reflects a great deal of careful analysis and interpretation of the surrounding area, according to Rollman. Foremost among the design team's goals was the visual continuity of the immediate block, starting with the 1920s Hecht's department store building (now Terrell Place) and continuing past its new addition (also designed by Smithgroup and completed in 2003). SmithGroup's design studies for the facade reveal a careful relationship between the theater and office building and the existing elevations along F Street. These studies set the datum lines for the building by picking up on the primary horizontal elements of the adjacent structures and carrying them across the new facade. Considering the number of separate buildings from different periods on the block, they form a surprisingly harmonious architectural ensemble.

Combining six stories of theater spaces within an 11-story office building along with three levels of below-grade parking in downtown DC is a very complex project that has turned out remarkably well in numerous respects. Perhaps the most satisfying aspect of the new Harman Hall/BAC headquarters building, however, is the extent to which it complements—architecturally and culturally— the increasingly vibrant neighborhood in which it is located. From outside, especially at night, the new building is a beacon drawing theatergoers and others simply curious to see what is going on there. From the inside, the giant "bay window" provides breathtaking views and allows visitors to make clear visual connections to the landmarks at either end of the F Street corridor. In these ways, the building becomes not only a destination in itself, but also an integral part of the city.

Make Innovation Work For You



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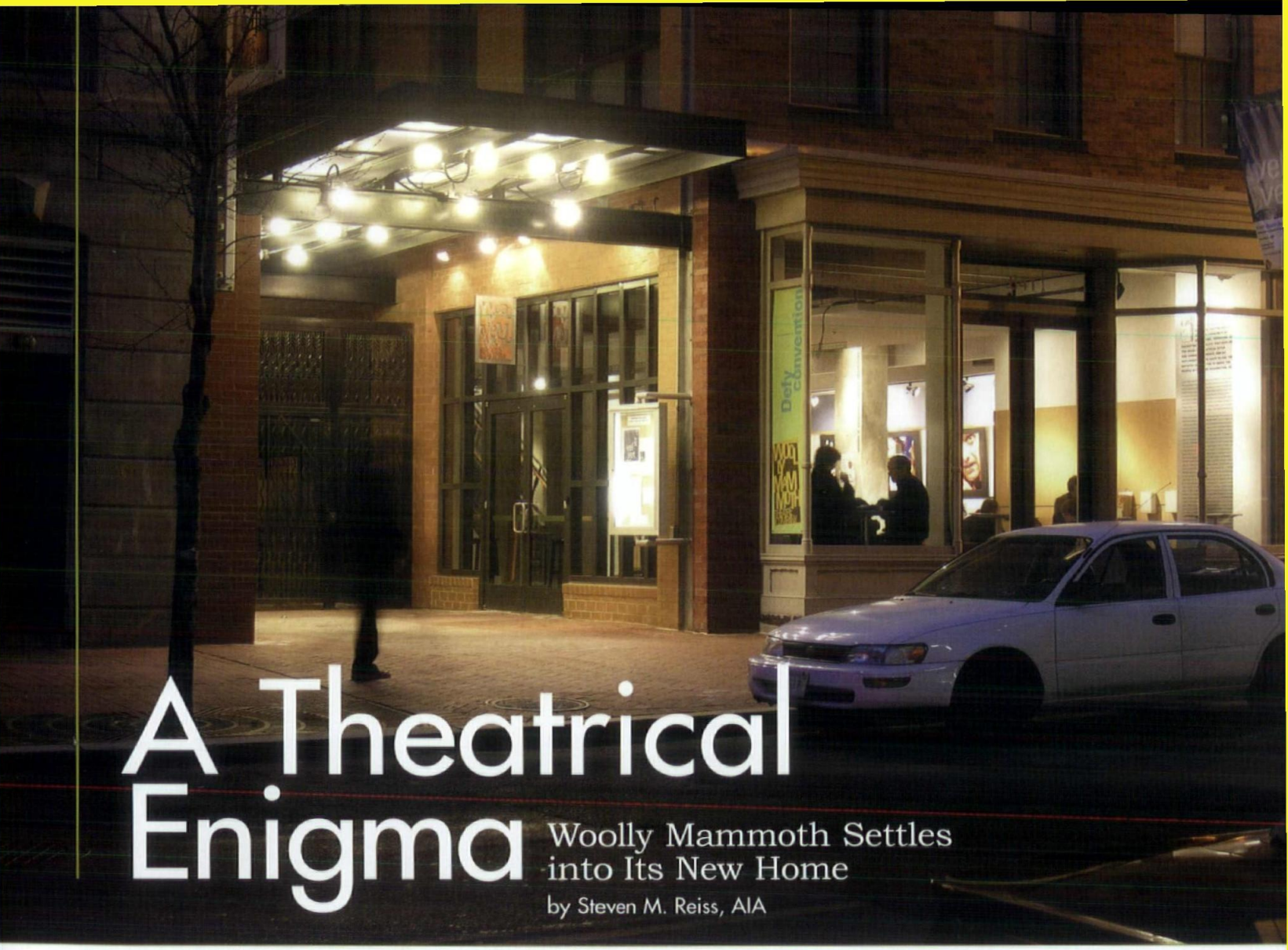


A Theatrical Enigma

Woolly Mammoth Settles into Its New Home

by Steven M. Reiss, AIA

Main entrance to Woolly Mammoth Theatre, designed to evoke traditional "stage door."

Enter the lobby of the new Woolly Mammoth Theatre and you just may be getting a glimpse of what is inside the head of the company's artistic director, Howard Shalwitz. So says the theater's architect, **Mark McInturff, FAIA.**

Winner of a national Honor Award from the American Institute of Architects, the Woolly Mammoth Theatre surprises first-time visitors on many levels, literally and figuratively. From its stage-door-like entrance on D Street, NW, just off 7th Street, to the rawness of its deliberately unfinished interior surfaces, the facility's design echoes the company's avant-garde mission and unconventional spirit.

To fully understand the relationship between the design and the theater's mission—and its 27 years of cutting-edge performances—one must return to Woolly Mammoth's beginnings in 1980. As described by Shalwitz, "The idea was simple—pull together a group of exceptionally talented actors, mold them into a company, seek innovative scripts with something challenging to say, and find fresh approaches to acting, directing, and design. Above all, don't be afraid of risks." Fast forward to today, and Shalwitz is still pursuing his concept of collaboration and risk-taking, but this time with respect to the architecture of the theater itself, with a focus on creating a performance space with "a sense of thereness."

Shalwitz has spent his entire life in theater. Having analyzed why some theaters work and others do not, he feels strongly that the best ones are those made from "found space"—in other words, space that is not completely new. Why? "Because theater is spontaneous; it is of the moment; no performance is the same as another; a performance is never repeated…unlike art which just hangs on the wall. Theater should feel less permanent…here today, gone tomorrow. It is dynamic, not static."

The new Woolly Mammoth space started with a classically Washingtonian case of "gone tomorrow." In 1996, the Pennsylvania Avenue Development Corporation (PADC) ceased operations, having largely fulfilled its mission. Its residual holdings—which included Parcel 457-C, the site that now includes the theater—were transferred to the U.S. General Services Administration (GSA), which, following PADC's business model, opened the site to bids from private developers. After a lengthy process, the GSA selected JPI Apartment Development LP to develop the parcel as a mixed-use project, with D.C.-based **Esocoff & Associates** as master planners and architects. To bolster the city's goal of an "arts corridor" along 7th Street, GSA required that an arts facility of at least 5,000 square feet be included as part of the project. **Philip Esocoff, FAIA,** knew that Woolly Mammoth was looking for a new home, and he thought that it would be an ideal tenant for the arts facility, if its actual space requirement—35,000 square feet—could be accommodated.

Photo by Julia Heine/McInturff Architects

Happily, it could be. To avoid what would have been significant structural modifications and to minimize the need for columns, Esocoff set aside a space for the theater beneath the building's central courtyard. This provided the requisite space, albeit in a subterranean location, with a long narrow connection to the street entrance. To quote McInturff, "Woolly Mammoth knew they had a space that was what Woolly was about; our mission was to translate it into architecture." It was not quite "found space" in a literal sense, but arguably the equivalent thereof in a new building. Shalwitz and McInturff agree that Esocoff was a key part of the success of the project. As Shalwitz says, "Phil created an opportunity…Mark took full advantage of that opportunity."

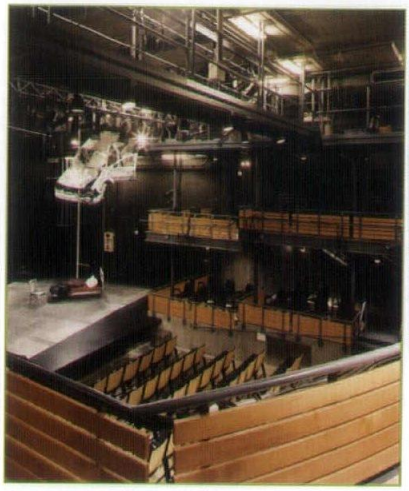


Photo by Julia Heine/McInturff Architects

Stage as seen from a balcony.

A New Project Type for McInturff

McInturff Architects is well known in the Washington region and nationally for modern works of architecture that uniquely fit their sites, whether rural or urban, but most of the firm's projects have been single-family residences, and none were theaters. Yet McInturff was able to prevail in a multi-step selection process, in which some 80 architecture firms that expressed an interest in the project were narrowed to 20 semifinalists by Shalwitz, with assistance from **Roger K. Lewis, FAIA** Ultimately, six finalists were interviewed.

For McInturff, the cultural and intellectual components of the project were especially appealing, as was the opportunity to work with creative people. In his words, "There are common threads; we [creative people] are different but the same."

Realizing that he could not bring specific theater design experience to the project, McInturff addressed this head on during the first of the two selection interviews. "I told the client, 'The bad news is that I have no theater design experience …and the good news is that I have no theater design experience.'"

Shalwitz clearly remembers that of all those interviewed, McInturff was the only one who talked about the specific issues, challenges, and opportunities of the project, using three-dimensional sketches, without offering specific design solutions. Shalwitz felt that even though McInturff was the least experienced of the finalists in theater design, he best understood the opportunities presented by the complexities of the site. "Mark blew the competition away."

Just as he might assemble actors of diverse talents for a particular play, Shalwitz teamed McInturff with Theatre Projects Consultants (TPC), an experienced consulting firm with a portfolio of more than 800 projects in 50 countries. Both firms were under direct contract to Woolly Mammoth, with Shalwitz performing an oversight role not unlike that for a theater production. According to Shalwitz the goals of the project were defined early in the design process: First, build one of the great small theaters in the world; second, reflect the risk-taking philosophy of Woolly Mammoth, and third, make performances affordable to the community. Early into the project Shalwitz and McInturff described their joint vision for the experience of Woolly—they called it "A Transparent Theatrical Laboratory."

In order to broaden their knowledge of theater design, McInturff suggested that the team embark on a tour of theaters

Main lobby.

Photo by Julia Heine/McInturff Architects

across the country and overseas. Concentrating much of their effort and time in London, the group attended numerous performances, including a visit to the functioning replica of Shakespeare's Globe. At the end of each day they would discuss and debate the elements of the theaters they had visited. This immersion process not only exposed the team to different types of theater designs, but also provided an opportunity for them to engage in complex discussions about how the mission of Woolly Mammoth and the design solution could come together. "We learned together," recalls Shalwitz. The team returned to Washington prepared to move forward.

Photo by Julia Heine/McInturff Architects

Lower lobby, with curving wall of actual theater space at right.

Designing for Clarity and Mystery

"A ritual of movement," is how Shalwitz describes McInturff's initial focus on the $8.5 million project. McInturff felt that the 100-foot path from the street to the theater facility should evoke the experience of entering a little city—"a spatial experience"—and so the movement into the building became the starting point of the design. Initially there was some consideration given to entering the theater through a historic building façade that had been incorporated into the larger project. McInturff was concerned, however, that this "drugstore" entrance did not have enough presence. He proposed, instead, locating the entrance in an adjacent pedestrian alleyway, thereby creating a small courtyard and providing pre-performance space for early arrivers. This courtyard entrance became an updated version of the classic "stage door."

The arrival sequence and movement through the lobby take the audience through what Frank Lloyd Wright would have called "a procession of discovery." Upon entering the lobby one is struck by the long and narrow dimensions of the space, intersected with stairways, ceiling planes, and catwalks. McInturff explains that "a statement was inevitable given its length and size." Throughout this three-floor volume one sees the complex workings of a theater—every function and movement. To establish a sense of orientation, McInturff set in place a dramatic, backlit curved wall which visitors quickly understand encloses the theater. Shalwitz explains that the space becomes activated by virtue of its openness, its narrowness, and the pre-performance crowd moving between levels. Often there will be rehearsals and a performance occurring simultaneously, which further reveals how the theater functions.

The transparent laboratory concept of the theater contrasts with design elements that express the slightly darker side of the Woolly's personality. As McInturff explains, "The lobby is a place that is somewhere between a welcome and a warning." The space is successful, he believes, because "there are so many vantage points; you can be detached and watch the crowd or become involved in the activity. There are numerous social opportunities." McInturff flooded the space with light from a cut-out originating at the courtyard above, resulting in a strange dichotomy: the light illuminating the walls of this long and narrow space is a welcoming gesture, yet the unfinished columns, raw concrete floor and various dark spaces combine to provide a sense of mystery, anticipation, and caution.

The Proof Is in the Performance

Within the performance hall one sees the positive results of the close collaboration between McInturff and TPC. The theater assumes a courtyard form that can be arranged for thrust or proscenium configurations. It includes a mezzanine and a seating arrangement that guarantees that none of the 265 seats is farther than 120 feet from the stage. This form was selected in part because of the group's visit to the reconstructed Globe. Shalwitz explains, "We used an older form [for the layout]. The courtyard works best for edgy plays because it creates a more dynamic relationship between actors and audience. It enhances the actor–audience relationship, which is key. A courtyard also allows for a wider price range," because it requires less infrastructure, which is important because Woolly strives to continuously attract young audience and young playwrights. "In stadium seating there is no sense of community. Here you want to feel the power of the open space; the audience relates to each other."

The facility includes space for building stage sets on site, a somewhat uncommon luxury among urban theaters. Accessed via large double doors connected directly to the stage, the area is nothing if not convenient. "The sets are built on site; this is the best relationship; the layout is brilliant," according to Shalwitz. One of the places that Shalwitz enjoys the most are the theater's offices, located in a

Main lobby as seen from entrance.

Photo by Julia Heine/McInturff Architects

Theater space as seen from stage.

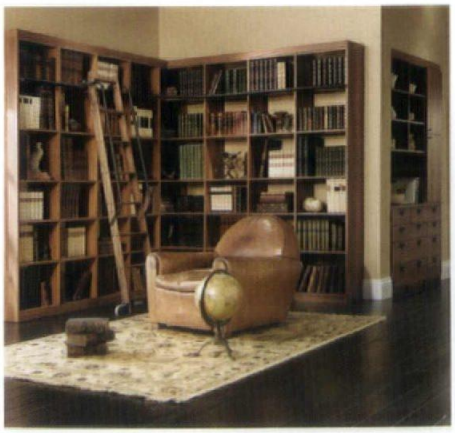
volume above the theater in space that fortuitously became available later in the process.

Learning by Doing

Five years from when the project began and two years after the company's first performance there, Shalwitz describes completing the new Woolly with an "enormous sense of pride and accomplishment. "The offices are great; the functionality is beyond expectations. So many things work well." He speaks in awe of the "breathtaking space." At every performance there is "a sense of electricity." McInturff echoes this as he recalls attending his first performance at the theater. "The intimacy of the space, even when filled with people, creates a collective type of space and a connection to the stage."

A proven maxim is that a client needs time to learn about his new building. It is a relationship that, in the case of the Woolly, has taken two years. Shalwitz remembers on opening night realizing that there is no finish here … it is just beginning. New space creates new opportunities. As the institution grows, "What is our life in the space…how do we grow in the space?," he ponders. Shalwitz continues, "After two years we are finally beginning to feel like we are there. Two years of learning and now another stage of development." When he looks at the still-new theatre he sees nothing but opportunities.

Oh, and about McInturff's suggestion that the new lobby provides a peek inside the artistic director's head, Shalwitz laughs and agrees, "The theater does reflect what Woolly is about."



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Atlas Rising

A Refurbished Landmark Brings Backs the Buzz on H Street, NE

by Denise Liebowitz

When a visionary, generous patron and a community eager for renewal combine with an architect who can see beyond the ruins of a crumbling wreck, the possibilities are powerful. Leading the revival of riot-damaged H Street, NE, the Atlas Performing Arts Center stands as the triumph of art and community over urban decline.

The visionary is Jane Lang, a "recovering lawyer" with a passion for the theater. In 2001, shortly after she formed a family foundation to promote the arts with her husband and former law partner, Paul Sprenger, Lang set off in quest of a project. Working with the Cultural Development Corporation (CuDC), a private, nonprofit organization that engages arts organizations in community development, Lang set her sights on the once-grand Atlas movie house in the 1300 block of H Street, NE.

Built in 1938, the 1,100-seat, Art Moderne facility was designed by prominent theater architect John Zink. The theater opened with the movie *Love Finds Andy Hardy* and celebrated its launch with Leon Busiloff's Swing Band. The early owners were among the first in Washington to install air conditioning in their movie house. They also provided a nursery where movie goers could drop off their kids and built shops next to their theater. However, the theater's glory days were numbered. With middle class flight to the suburbs beginning in the 1950s and the riots of 1968, H Street began a precipitous commercial slide and the Atlas finally closed in 1976.

As Lang put it, she envisioned the vacant building as "a Kennedy Center for the people," and with the support of additional funders and

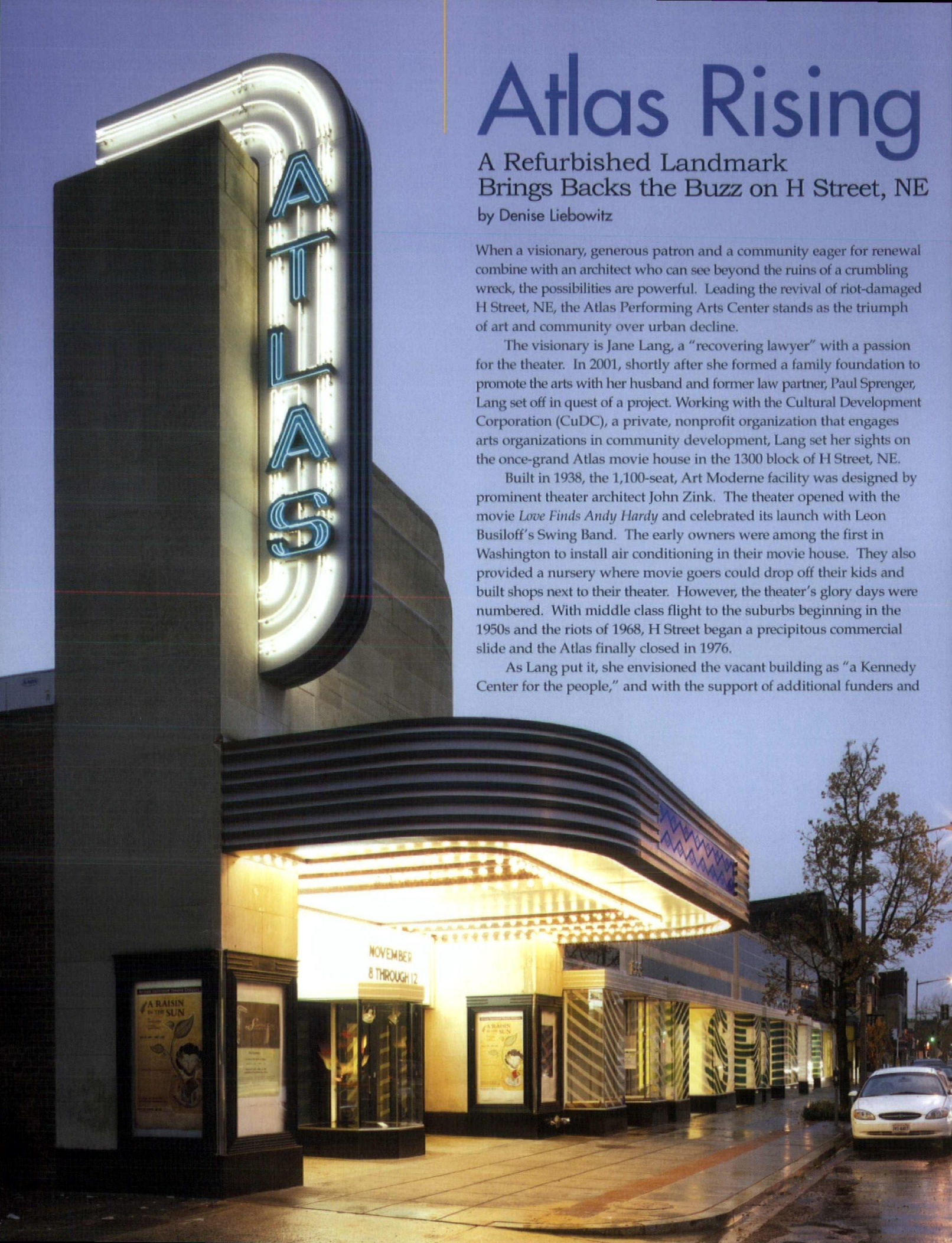


Photo by Michael Moran

theater supporters, she set out to transform the space and make it available for community-based arts performances. A historic building that had long been a landmark in this Northeast neighborhood was poised for a rebirth.

CuDC connected Lang with **CORE architecture + design** and **project principal Dale Stewart, AIA.** As Stewart recalls, CORE was called in initially to prepare only the background documents; a New York-based theater design consulting firm was hired to develop the design. When the plans arrived from New York several months later, "they didn't work and did not meet the program," says Stewart. "I asked Jane to give us two weeks, CORE drew up the plans, and she liked what she saw." But Lang was skeptical of hiring a firm that did not have theater design experience. "We told her we know how to manage large projects, put together a team, and work with consultants," recalls Stewart. Architect and client were off and running.

The $20 million renovation began in 2004 and was completed in November 2006. The finished 59,000-square-foot complex seamlessly blends the 1938 movie house with four adjacent retail storefronts. The new facility houses a fixed-seat theater that can accommodate 280, a flexible black box theater for up to 250, two additional lab theaters, as well as a green room, three dance studios, a set production shop, offices, and dressing rooms designed to meet Equity standards. In the lobby, a grand staircase with bold steel columns, glass railings, and modern architectural mesh panels dramatically leads up to the main Lang Theatre.

To squeeze all these facilities into the original footprint, Stewart excavated to create underground space and raised the roof of the main theater and the black box theater. He found extra lobby space by enclosing the outdoor service alley that once ran between the movie house and the adjacent storefronts. Showcased on these exposed brick walls of the former alleyway are two decorative plaster panels that once flanked the old stage and screened the early air conditioning equipment. Outside, the original Atlas marquee has been meticulously restored with more than 100 incandescent lights and polished stainless steel accents and now serves as a bright beacon along reviving H Street.

Creating a state-of-the-art theater space within the old wood-framed structure required special effort. To achieve a sound-insulated, modern acoustical environment, a light steel framework and steel panel roof were constructed. A highly flexible, fully trapped stage was designed for the main fixed-seat theater. (Traps are the concealed openings in the stage floor through which scenery can be moved and actors can suddenly appear or disappear.) It takes only two people to quickly disassemble and rearrange the stage, but it's strong enough to support an elephant if necessary.

For Stewart the central challenge was "fitting an extremely demanding program into a very small footprint with a very limited budget." For example, "The budget provided for only one elevator and we had to carefully consider how it could do everything we needed it to do and make all the spaces ADA accessible." Today, riders on the Atlas's hardworking elevator with front and back doors can choose from among nine different stops in a three-story building.

CORE worked closely with its client, Lang, and with the theater professionals who consulted on the project. "These really weren't consulting firms," says Stewart, "they were theater lighting designers and stage set designers who simply knew what was required. It was very collaborative and none of us knew enough to step on each other's toes. Jane attended every design meeting and absolutely trusted the advice of the theater professionals. If we told her that what they wanted was beyond the budget, she'd say, 'Well, we'll just have to find the money'."

Stewart says the original objective was to design the facility to a standard that fell somewhere between a community theater space and a professional commercial theater. "I think the end result is actually much closer to the quality of a first-class professional facility," he says.

The many arts and performance organizations that now call Atlas home seems to agree. One of these is StepAfrika!, whose founder and executive director Brian Williams is delighted with the professional, flexible space. "Jane Lang and Paul Sprenger have done an amazing job. The space is totally adaptable for rehearsals, daily company rehearsals, and master dance classes; every day we find new ways to use it. We can rehearse in the small, experimental theater lab to try something new and maybe a little crazy, or we can put on a full-fledged performance in the big theater. Today we did a full-day photo shoot plus eight hours of rehearsal; the space suits 30 to 40 kids or just a few people."

In addition to StepAfrika! performing the unique African-American step dance tradition, other Atlas partners include the Capital City Symphony, offering a symphonic repertoire and 20th-century music; the Washington Savoyards, providing light opera; and the Levine School of Music, bringing its Senior Choir and faculty concerts to the Atlas. Recent programs at the theater have ranged from a Gilbert and Sullivan Mikado Sing-a-long to the African Continuum Theatre's dramatic productions rooted in the African-American experience. The Congressional Chorus recently offered up a Roaring Twenties Cabaret and the Expansion Dance Project performed the Broadway musical, The Wiz.

The Capital City Symphony offers five full orchestra concerts and at least one chamber music program each season at the Atlas. According to the group's music director, Victoria Gau, their family programs are among the most popular, and the biggest hit of all is the free community carol sing, which the symphony shares with the Congressional Chorus. "The simple fact that we remain in one place rather than having our performances all over town has done wonders for us, since the audience doesn't have to think where to find us," reports Gau. "The sense of permanence given by being in residence at the Atlas has made us attractive to funders who had taken no notice of us in the 38 years of the orchestra's existence before it came to the Atlas!"

Restored marquee.

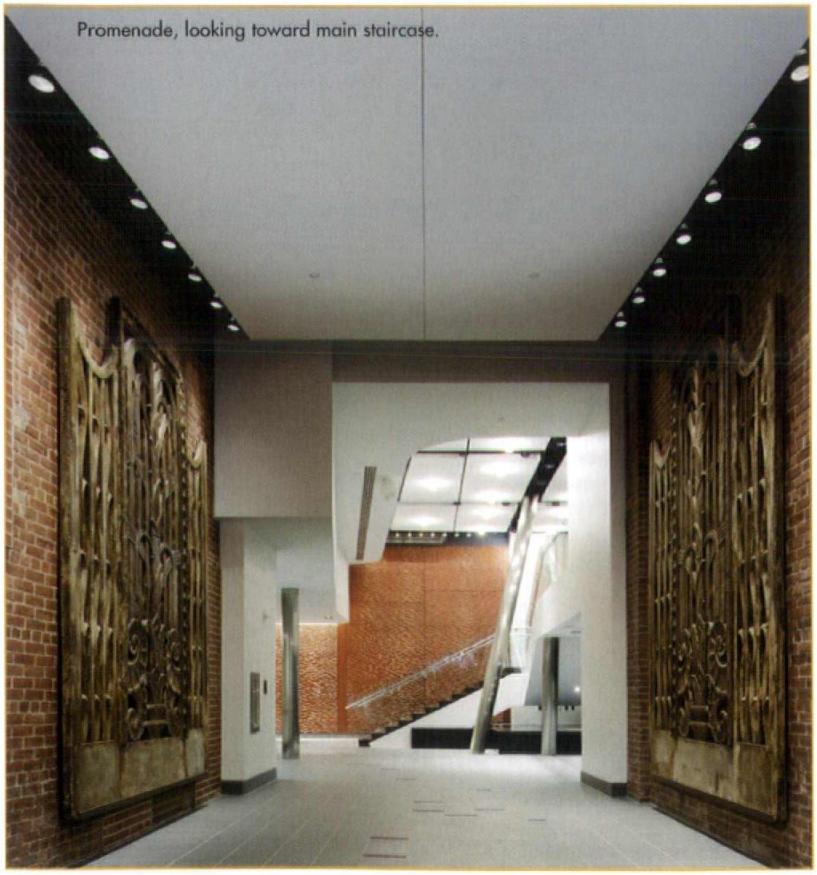
One important partner, the Joy of Motion Dance Center, occupies the newly refurbished storefront space adjacent to the old movie house. Once home to a Safeway and before that a wig factory, the space now features three light-filled dance studios with rubberized floors. Each semester, Joy of Motion provides more than 500 kids and adults with dance classes, workshops, and master classes. The windows on the street façade of the studios are cleverly animated with full-height lettering in eye-catching colors that give dancers privacy while allowing natural light to filter into the interior.

Missing no opportunity to maximize the use of their facility, Atlas administrators make the space available for private parties, community gatherings, and art-related events. In an under-used costume studio, a weekend cabaret has recently taken hold. Now that the Atlas has received it liquor license, cabaret patrons can enjoy local jazz and comedy performers in a club-like setting.

According to Jen DeMayo, communications director for the center, some Atlas patrons had expressed unease about parking their cars on nearby streets and walking to an evening performance. To ease those concerns, says DeMayo, the center has recently introduced a valet parking service. At the same time, she points to the resurgence of the corridor and the continuing arrival of new restaurants and businesses.

StepAfrika!'s Williams calls the H Street location "stunning. We love being in a living, working neighborhood, only minutes from downtown, with plenty of easy street parking and excellent bus service." StepAfrika! especially appreciates the proximity of Union Station. Says Williams, "We have visitors arrive on the train from New York, grab a cab, and be here in a couple of minutes—totally convenient."

The Atlas has been recognized with the Mayor's Award for Excellence in Historic Preservation and, as the recipient of the 2007 Catalyst and Historic Resources Awards of AIA | DC, the performing arts center was featured in the Winter 2007 issue of *ARCHITECTURE**DC*** Page 35.



Promenade, looking toward main staircase.

Photo by Michael Moran

Corridor outside lab theaters.

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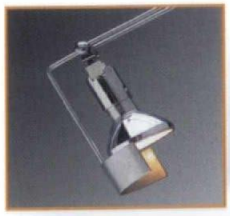

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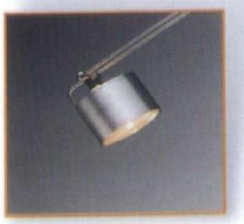

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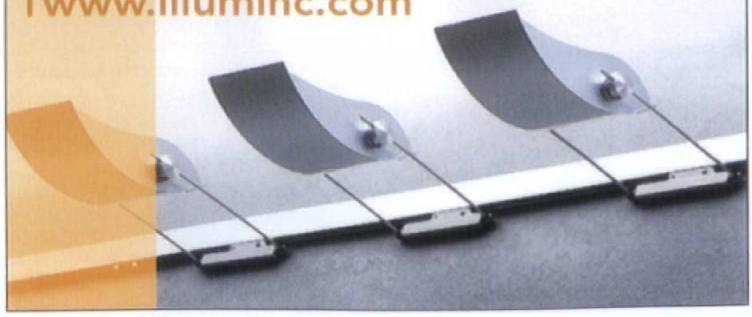

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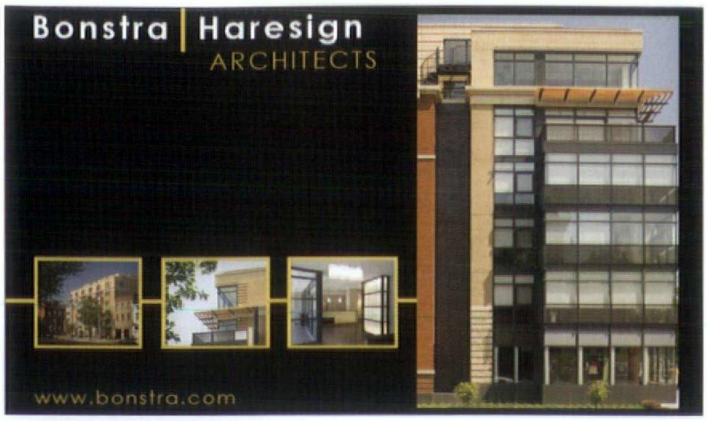

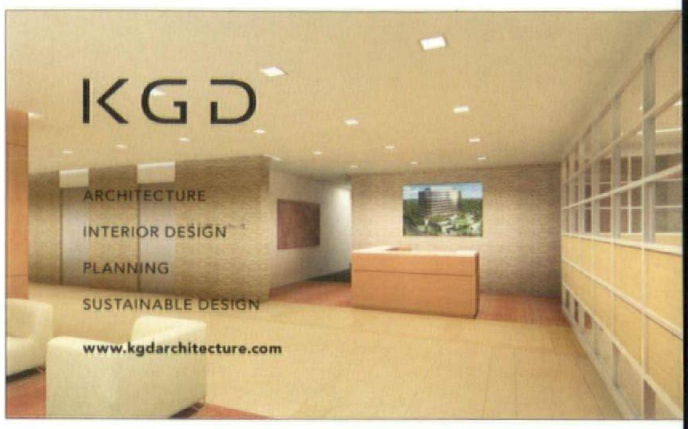

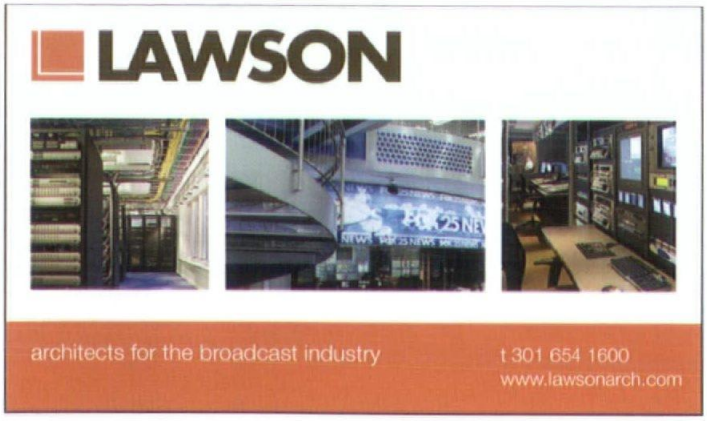

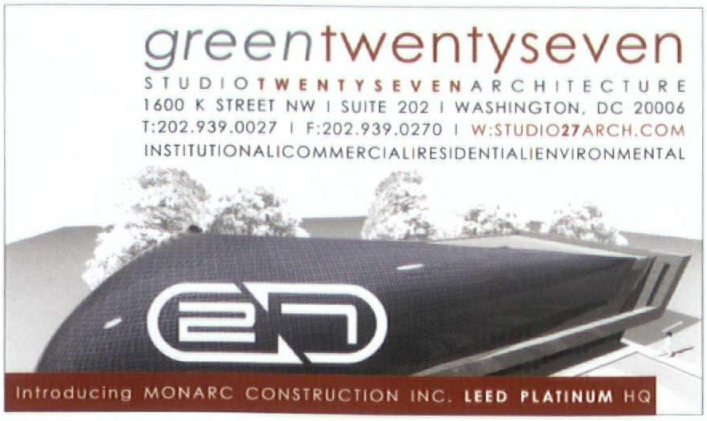

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General view of recreation center.

Gymnasium, which featu
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Not Just Another Red Brick Box

Devrouax + Purnell's High-Energy King Greenleaf Recreation Center Breaks the Mold of Past Designs

by Ronald O'Rourke

It's not every day that an architect gets a chance to design a new recreation center for his own children, but that was precisely the opportunity given to **Anthony Brown, Assoc. AIA,** of the DC-based firm of **Devrouax + Purnell Architects.** Brown, who has been the lead designer at Devrouax + Purnell since 1985, was the project designer for the King Greenleaf Recreation Center located at 201 N Street, SW, in the Greenleaf part of DC's rapidly changing Capitol South area.

Among the staff at Devrouax + Purnell, Brown says, "I in particular was excited during the interview [for the project]—about the opportunity to design a rec center not only in my own community, but one block away, within viewing distance [of my kids' home]." His goal for the project was to design "a wonderful place where my children and others can play b'ball in a first-class rec facility."

In addition to being on his children's doorstep, the King Greenleaf center is just a few blocks away from another project that Brown and his colleagues at Devrouax + Purnell helped design—the new baseball stadium for the Washington Nationals.

While the stadium and many of the other buildings recently completed or under construction in the Capitol South area are intended in large part to draw new people into the area, the King Greenleaf center, a project funded by the DC Department of Parks and Recreation, is intended primarily for people who have been there all along. The 16,500-square-foot, $4.5-million facility, which replaces an earlier structure, serves residents of Greenleaf, Syphax Gardens, and James Creek. In addition to hosting athletic activities, the King Greenleaf center supports a variety of learning activities and is also used for meetings and other community events.

Construction of the center began in 2004 and was completed within budget in 2005. The building was featured briefly in the Spring 2006 issue of *ARCHITECTURE**DC*** (page 21), but deserves a longer look.

Brown set out "to design a facility that breaks the mold of past rec centers," and he certainly succeeded. The King Greenleaf center, like some other buildings that Brown has designed, is a high-energy, modernist composition characterized by sharp angles, curved surfaces,

Photo by Ken Wyner

Photo by Ken Wyner

Main entrance.

and lots of glass. Brown says that this style of design, which has become a bit of a signature look for Devrouax + Purnell projects, was inspired by some of the early works of Carlos Zapata, a modernist architect who works out of New York.

"The curved exterior walls and arched, sloping roof," Devrouax + Purnell says, "are a distinct departure from the standard 'pillbox' park houses of the past." That might be putting it mildly. Viewed from some angles, the King Greenleaf center looks like a futuristic airport terminal building, while from others, it looks a bit like an advanced, saucer-like aircraft that might have just landed at such a facility. The building's design, at once strong and graceful, has made it an area landmark. And far from being arbitrary, the high-energy nature of the building's form suggests the high-flying, energetic activities that take place inside.

"Why design another red brick rec center?," Brown asks. "The challenge was to design something timeless and permanent." The building's form, he says, "creates an energy that average boxes don't have."

The design of the King Greenleaf center, however, isn't simply a story about swooping walls and other dramatic gestures, but of intelligent building orientation and rational arrangement of interior spaces as well.

Brown placed the building's main entrance at its southeast corner, where it faces the neighborhood, and oriented the gymnasium's large window wall in the other direction, toward M Street to the north, where it visually connects the gymnasium's indoor basketball court to the outdoor basketball and tennis courts on the north side of the building. At night, when the gymnasium lights are on for games or community events, the window wall turns the building into a lantern that signals ongoing community activities to people driving by on M Street. (To help reduce the building's energy needs, the window wall uses low-emissivity glass.)

Although the building appears complex when seen from the side, the design in plan view is quite simple and rational. The building's main space, the gymnasium, is a basic rectangle that accommodates several basketball hoops and a small set of bleachers capable of seating 200. A curving wall then wraps around the south and east sides of this rectangle. The curved wall is broken at its mid-point by a glass prow that forms the building's main entrance. Inside the building, to the right of the entrance, the curved wall encloses a community learning center equipped with computers, an arts and crafts room, a game room, and the rec center's office. To the left of the entrance, the curved wall encloses an exercise room, the men's and women's restrooms, showers, and lockers, and the building's mechanical room. The layout is simple and functional, but the curved wall and the wedge-like shape of the main entrance lobby make the arrangement more dynamic and exciting.

Brown says that when the King Greenleaf center first went up, "some people said, 'This building is too nice to be in our neighborhood!' And we said, 'No it isn't!'" It's a point that Brown makes not just as an architect, but as a father. Devrouax + Purnell hope that the King Greenleaf center will become a model for future city recreation centers, and there are probably lots of neighborhoods that would be very happy to have a facility like this one.

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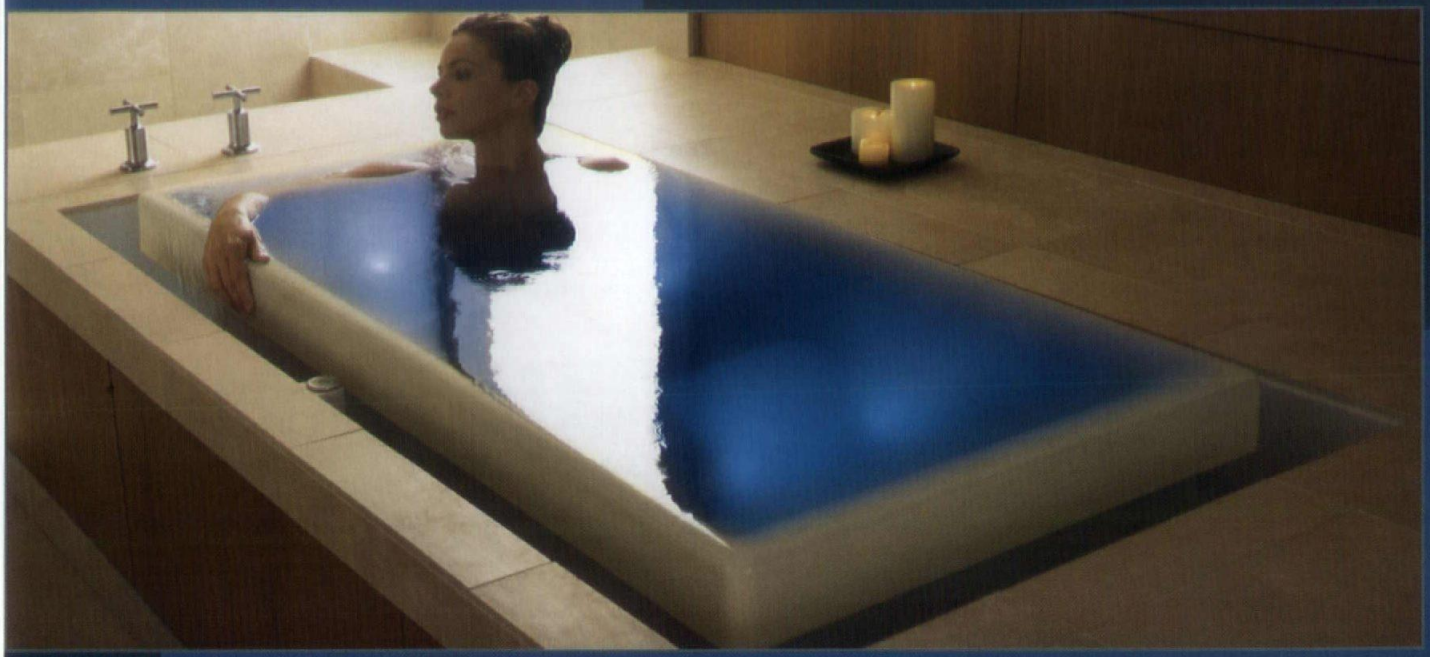

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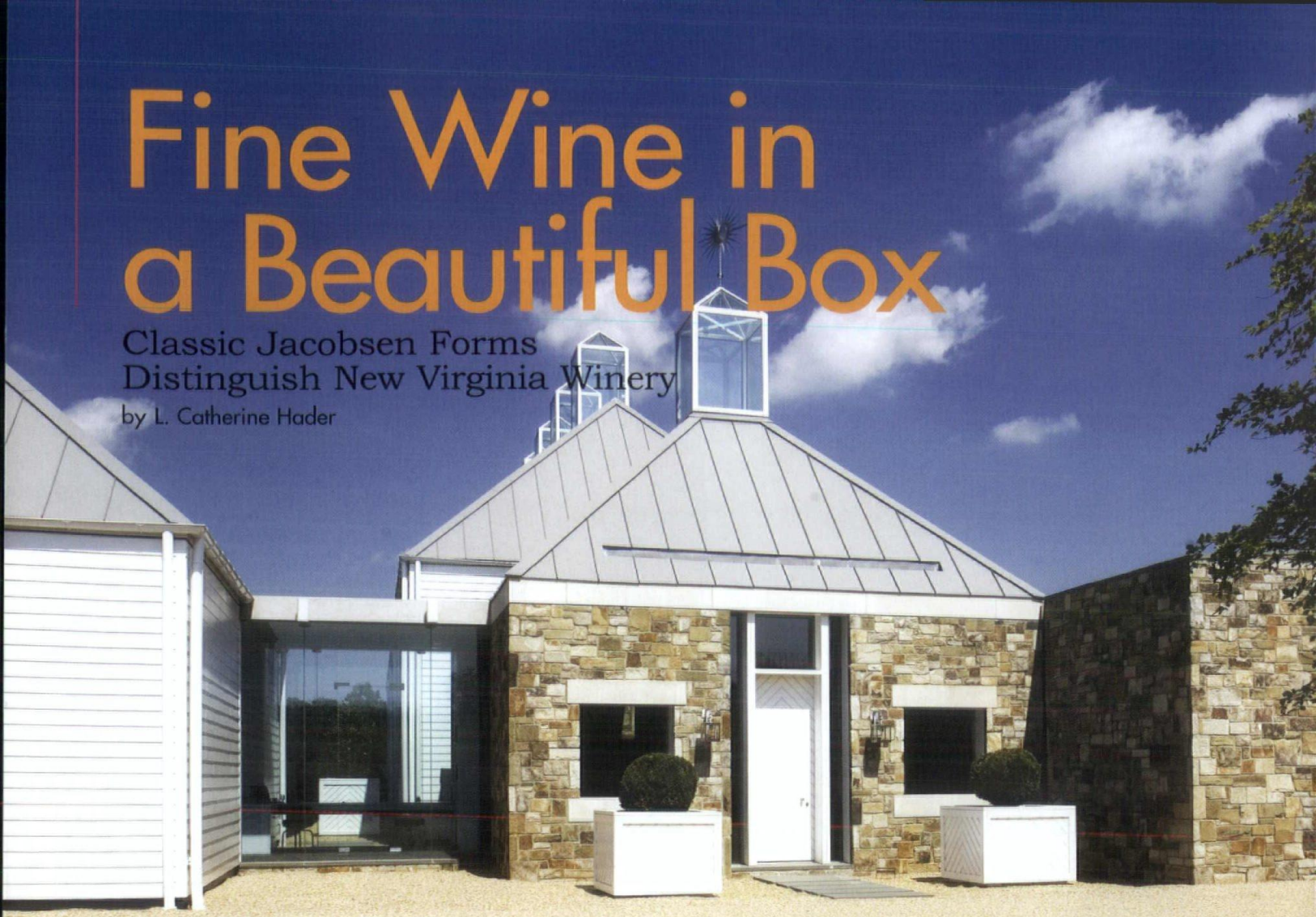
Fine Wine in a Beautiful Box

Classic Jacobsen Forms Distinguish New Virginia Winery

by L. Catherine Hader



If television were to bring us the world's coolest jobs instead of the world's dirtiest jobs, surely winemaking would be in the Coolest Top Ten.

Winemaking begins with acres and acres of green vineyards in sun-kissed, breeze-caressed pastoral settings. And in the end—done well—it produces the perfect accompaniment to a pleasant meal or gathering of friends. What's not to like?

The in-between—from field to bottle—can be the tricky part. Endless variations of timing, equipment, blending, and aging may be involved to produce a wine both palatable and pleasing. The facilities in which these activities take place vary as well, taking their cues from the vision and business goals of their owners and also from their setting.

The Commonwealth of Virginia lays claim to more than 100 of the nation's 3,700 wineries. Even within this relatively small sample, the winery facilities, sales approaches, means of engaging customers, and product vary widely. Some wineries provide picnic tables, pavilions, and barbeque grills and invite their customers to spend the day. Others may include a formal restaurant or other food service to enhance the tasting experience. Still others are focused keenly on the wine and the wine alone.

Consider Boxwood Winery. From the time the very first vine was planted and long before, owners Rita and John Kent Cooke—who had always wanted to own a winery—envisioned wines that would compete with the best of the best in the world. Quantities would be limited, quality would be high.

Knowingly or unknowingly, they shared a vision with one of Virginia's earliest vintners and American wine proponents. In the early 1800s Thomas Jefferson had said, "We could in the United States make as great a variety of wines as are made in Europe, not exactly the same kinds, but doubtless as good." John Kent Cooke has said much the same thing: "I am convinced that with today's viticultural knowledge and winemaking techniques Virginia can produce a premium wine as good as anywhere."

And but for the French grapes, the character of Boxwood Winery is Virginian through and through, from its owners to its Middleburg setting. The winery takes its name from its site, the historic (1826) Boxwood Farm, one of the earliest established farms in the region. And of course boxwood, Virginia's quintessential ornamental garden plant, graces colonial Virginia sites from Jamestown to the Shenandoah Valley and beyond—and Boxwood Winery's grounds.

With quality as a goal and Virginia as a given, vines were planted and grew, as did the ideas of what the ideal winery might look like. The aptly named Dr. Richard Vine, an oenologist, was retained to advise on facility specifics for a winery that would produce up to and no more than 5,000 cases annually. In turn, architect **Hugh Newell Jacobsen, FAIA** and son **Simon Jacobsen** were invited to join the team, not because of their experience designing wineries—this would be their first—but rather because of their skillful contextual approach to design. They understood the scale, character, and building materials prevalent in Middleburg and its

Above: Exterior view of winery, featuring characteristic Hugh Jacobsen pavilions.

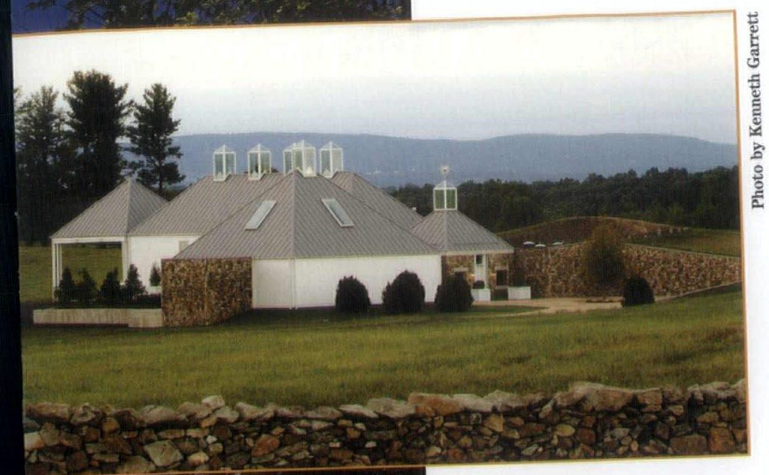


Photo by Kenneth Garrett

General view of winery building.

Photo by Robert Lautman

Dark, serene "cave" in which wine ages in oak barrels.

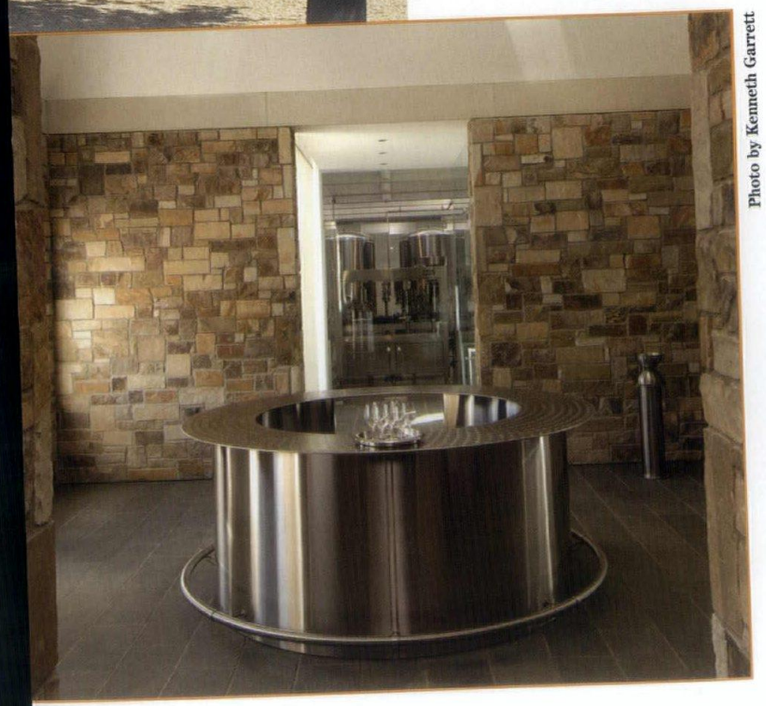


Photo by Kenneth Garrett

Tasting room.

surrounds—in this case, residential scale coupled with Virginia fieldstone, standing seam metal roofs, and cupolas. And they had enjoyed critical success with the many kinds of buildings they had designed in decades of architectural practice.

They were delighted to participate. "Here comes a winery," said the senior Jacobsen, "Hot dog!" Their enthusiasm was balanced, however, by a clear recognition of the owners' high aspirations and a desire to meet, if not exceed them.

Because the fundamental elements of the winemaking process—crush, ferment, age, bottle—cannot be changed most wineries include certain typical spaces in one configuration or another. At Boxwood, the primary spaces include the tasting area; *chai* or fermentation room; the cave, an underground, temperature-controlled area where the wine ages in French oak barrels; and the bottling plant.

While the inclusion of these spaces may be typical, their execution at Boxwood Winery is not. The winery's distinct personality is evident even in the approach to the building.

"All good buildings have a sequence of entry," says Hugh Jacobsen. At Boxwood, the visitor first enters a gate, beyond which a curved drive—"which we designed," notes Jacobsen—leads to an entry courtyard whose centerpiece is a "formidable" boxwood tree. "The entry sequence promises something," says Jacobsen, "and the design must fulfill that promise."

The promise is immediately fulfilled inside Boxwood's front door in the tasting area, where daylight streams from a central cupola atop the 22-foot ceiling. Here, "the whole building exposes itself," says Jacobsen. "All three important structures are there"—directly ahead, the *chai;* to the right, the cave; and to the left, the bottling area—each with its own *lagniappes.*

The length of the chai, which houses stainless steel fermentation tanks of 600, 1,000, and 2,000 gallons or either side, is daylit by glass cupolas above. The architects arranged the space to create a center area for circulation, which one would expect, but also made it wide enough to allow the space to be used for a social gathering.

The cave has been constructed underground to maintain an even temperature for aging the wine, but this is not a wine cellar of Thomas Jefferson's day. It's sleek, circular, and cool. Wine barrels radiate in concentric arcs from the center, lit from above by star-like halogen lights. Like the *chai,* the cave offers an unexpected benefit. Generous spaces in the cave's center and between the rows of barrels allow space for people to walk freely among them. The center area, similarly generous, is large enough to accommodate a small musical ensemble. In fact, some thought has been given to use the cave for "Concerts in the Country," in which case the circulation area would be used for seating.

For many, the words "bottling plant" might conjure an image of an unadorned and grim industrial space, filled with clanging, churning conveyor belts, and minimally illuminated by the harsh light of overhead fluorescent fixtures. Here again, however, the architects have taken a basic required space and made it something special. First, the layout provides ample space both for bottling and case storage. In addition, skylights convey daylight throughout the space, making it a pleasant place to be.

Much of the thought that has gone into the design of this new winery may not be evident to the visitor. Great care was taken to camouflage the building's systems—the piping that carries that wine from place to place, for example. "The mechanics had to be absolutely perfect," said Simon Jacobsen, noting that the winery's mechanical complexity had made the project different from any others they had worked on. A great deal of effort was expended to integrate the building systems with the architecture, to the extent that the Jacobsens assisted in the design and layout of the piping. HVAC, too, was camouflaged via discreet floor vents at perimeter walls.

Rachel Martin, Boxwood Winery executive vice president and manager (and stepdaughter of John Kent Cooke), worked with the Jacobsen team from the outset. Martin, responsible for wine production and marketing, works daily at Boxwood Winery and concludes, "We're really happy with the work they did."

Spring 2008 will see the first offering of Boxwood's estate-bottled wine, red only, produced in the Bordeaux tradition. After all, says the senior Jacobsen, "Wine is only serious when it's red."

Photo by Robert Lautman

"Chai" space, filled with metallic fermentation tanks.

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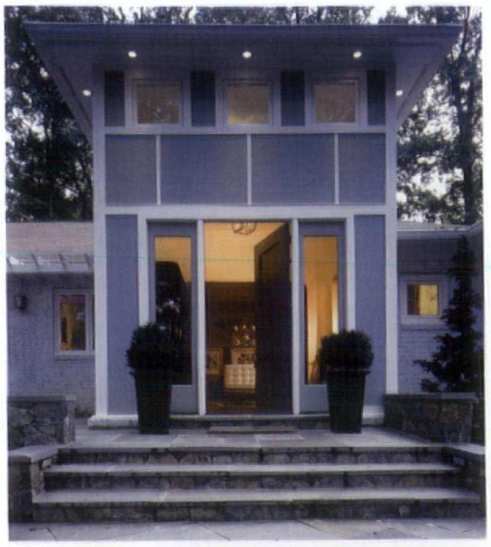

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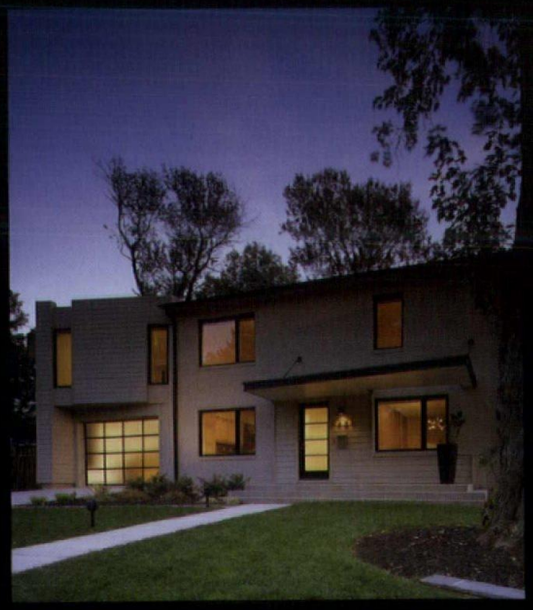

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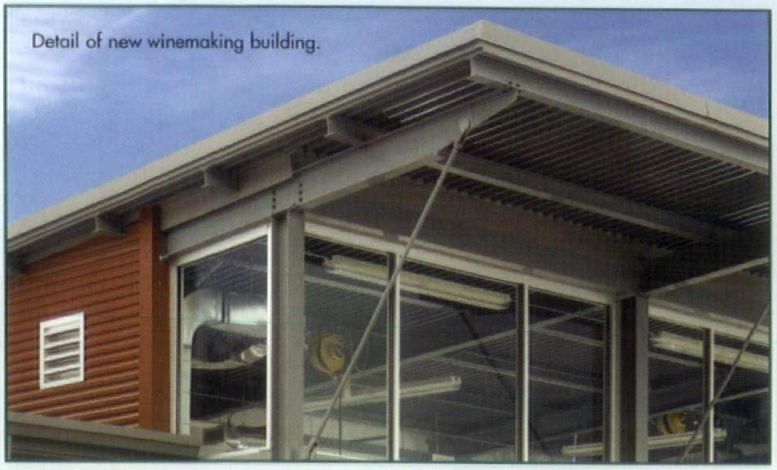


Detail of new winemaking building.

Photo by Paul Burk Photography

Once Upon a Vine

New Building Complements Historic Farm Structure at Sugarloaf Mountain Vineyard

by L. Catherine Hader

New structure at left, with existing barn and silo at right.

Every winery has a story.

The tale of Sugarloaf Mountain Vineyard goes something like this: It begins in 1962 with the O'Donoghue family, when parents Dan and Polly purchase a 92-acre farm in upper Montgomery County, Maryland.

In those days, the county's countryside was only beginning to see hints of development, soon to be hastened by the 1964 completion of interstate highway 270 between Frederick and Rockville. The O'Donoghues' "Windmill Farm" at the foot of Sugarloaf Mountain served as a working farm and rural retreat for the family for many years until the parents passed on. At that time, the farm conveyed to the O'Donoghues' four adult children.

What to do with a farm? Sell or hold?

They held for a while. Development was an option, albeit unappealing for reasons both practical and sentimental.

As early as the 1960s, Montgomery County's planning board and council had foreseen the demise of green space and the county's rural and Civil War heritage. In response, they implemented zoning and planning measures to help preserve the land. Even though these measures were strengthened during the 1970s, development continued largely unabated until the 1980 creation of the Montgomery County Agricultural Reserve. Through incentives (known as transferable development rights) for landowners, the Ag Reserve has successfully preserved tens of thousands of acres of farmland. The 92-acre O'Donoghue farm is

Photo by Paul Burk Photography

planted firmly in the center of the 90,000-acre reserve.

More importantly, the family had strong emotional attachments to the land. With memories of days spent playing in the barn and the sounds of the windmill, they were reluctant to relinquish their land for development and highly motivated to preserve it.

In 2002, the turning point for the O'Donoghue heirs, their spouses, and their farm arrived during a family trip to the wine country of Napa Valley, California. During that trip came the idea that perhaps they had the beginnings of a winery within their grasp.

Soil tests proved their land was ideal for growing grapes, and they began planting—19,000 vines' worth, French-certified. The grapes flourished in the rural Montgomery County microclimate, and by October 2004 the owners of Sugarloaf Mountain Vineyard anticipated a sizeable 2005 harvest—plus much work to turn it to wine. But where and how?

Enter the design firm of Cunningham | Quill Architects

As architects **Ralph Cunningham, AIA,** and **David Bagnoli, AIA,** tell their part of the story, when the O'Donoghues first contacted them that October, "they wanted a Butler® building!"—a bare bones metal industrial building to house their winemaking production.

Much discussion and exploration took place in the 11 months that ensued, and the results far exceed the original goal in multiple ways.

To be sure, the vineyard has a new building and it is industrial in nature. But in joining with an adjacent barn, the building also represents the first of two phases of a destination setting that will welcome visitors to relax and enjoy a day in the country.

The Windmill Farm fronts on the winding Comus Road byway, its early 1900s bank barn, silo, and windmill positioned near the road. Borrowing from the layout of other historical farms in the area, the designers positioned the new building as if it were an agricultural outbuilding. As visitors approach the winery and mountain by car, they first see the historic red barn's broad side and, secondarily, the lower-profile production facility set back from the road.

The new building clearly relates to the larger barn structure, though it differs in materials, size, and shape. At first glance, its barn-red metal walls and uncomplicated geometries could be mistaken for those of any common industrial building. The designers, however, in substituting glass for metal on nearly half the front façade, have opened the winemaking process to visitors and have engaged them—marketing at its best. In addition to the glass-fronted fermentation area, the production facility includes a receiving pad for the grapes and an area for barrel aging.

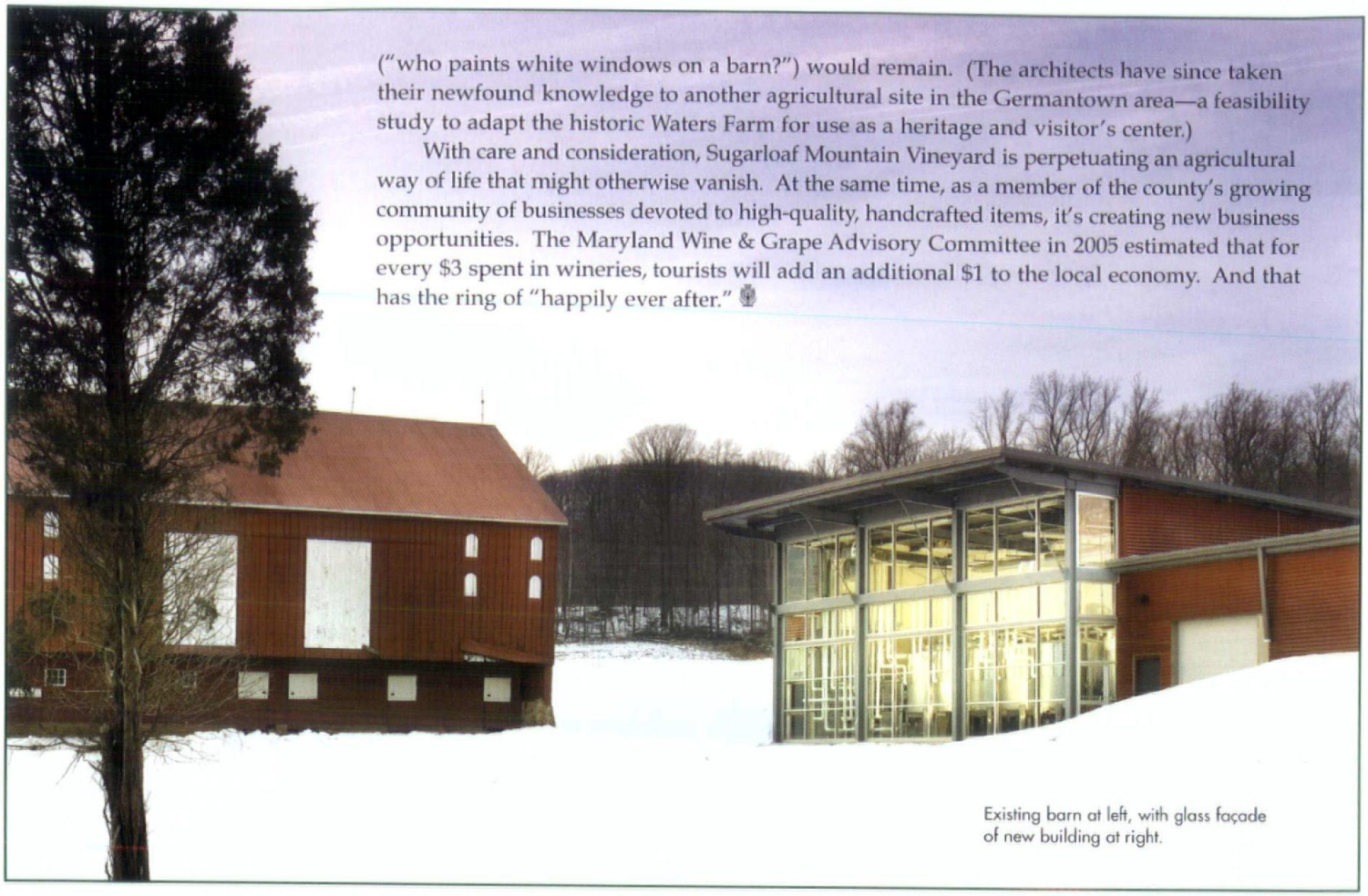
Just as this new building plays both production and marketing roles, the new forecourt serves multiple purposes as well. During harvest and production, it functions both as crush pad and mobile bottling space. Throughout the rest of the year it serves as a gathering place or parking area.

With the first phase complete and operational, the second phase, a renovation of the barn, is well underway. To accomplish its dual mission of tourism and administration, the barn will include a tasting room, an outdoor tasting terrace at the upper level, and offices. The silo will be turned into a library and private tasting area.

Every design involves research and learning, and renovations routinely offer up surprises. The barn, the designers soon learned, was built in the style of German immigrants who had settled in the area (giving Germantown, Maryland its name). This meant that design elements they might have wanted to eliminate, such as white "windows" painted on the barn façade

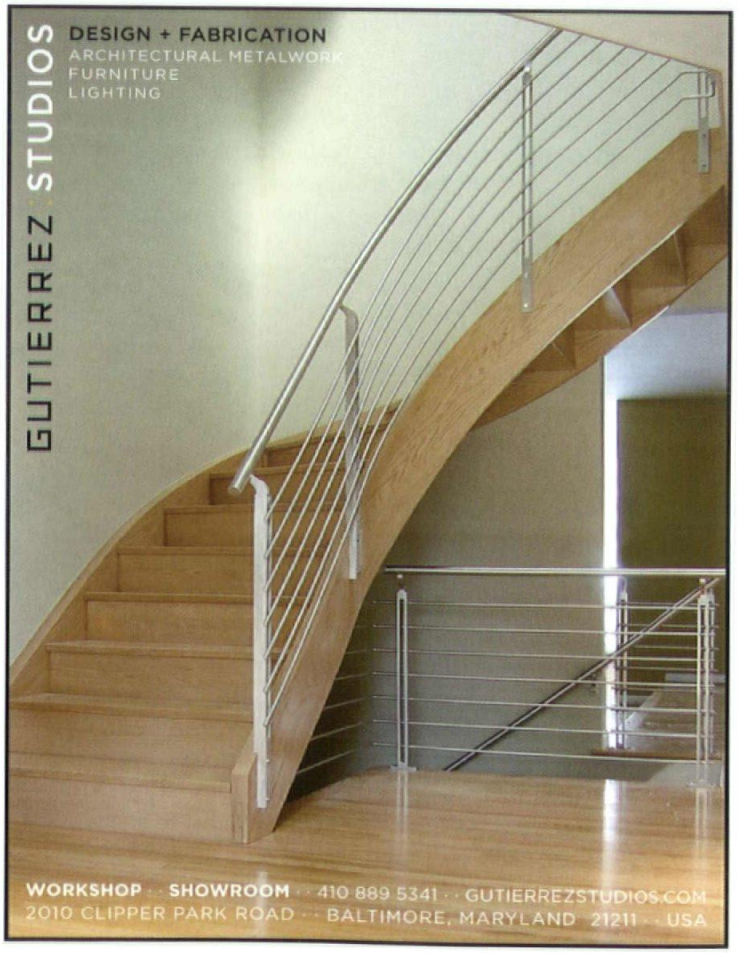
("who paints white windows on a barn?") would remain. (The architects have since taken their newfound knowledge to another agricultural site in the Germantown area—a feasibility study to adapt the historic Waters Farm for use as a heritage and visitor's center.)

With care and consideration, Sugarloaf Mountain Vineyard is perpetuating an agricultural way of life that might otherwise vanish. At the same time, as a member of the county's growing community of businesses devoted to high-quality, handcrafted items, it's creating new business opportunities. The Maryland Wine & Grape Advisory Committee in 2005 estimated that for every $3 spent in wineries, tourists will add an additional $1 to the local economy. And that has the ring of "happily ever after."



Existing barn at left, with glass façade of new building at right.

Photo by Paul Burk Photography



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Greening Up in Bethesda

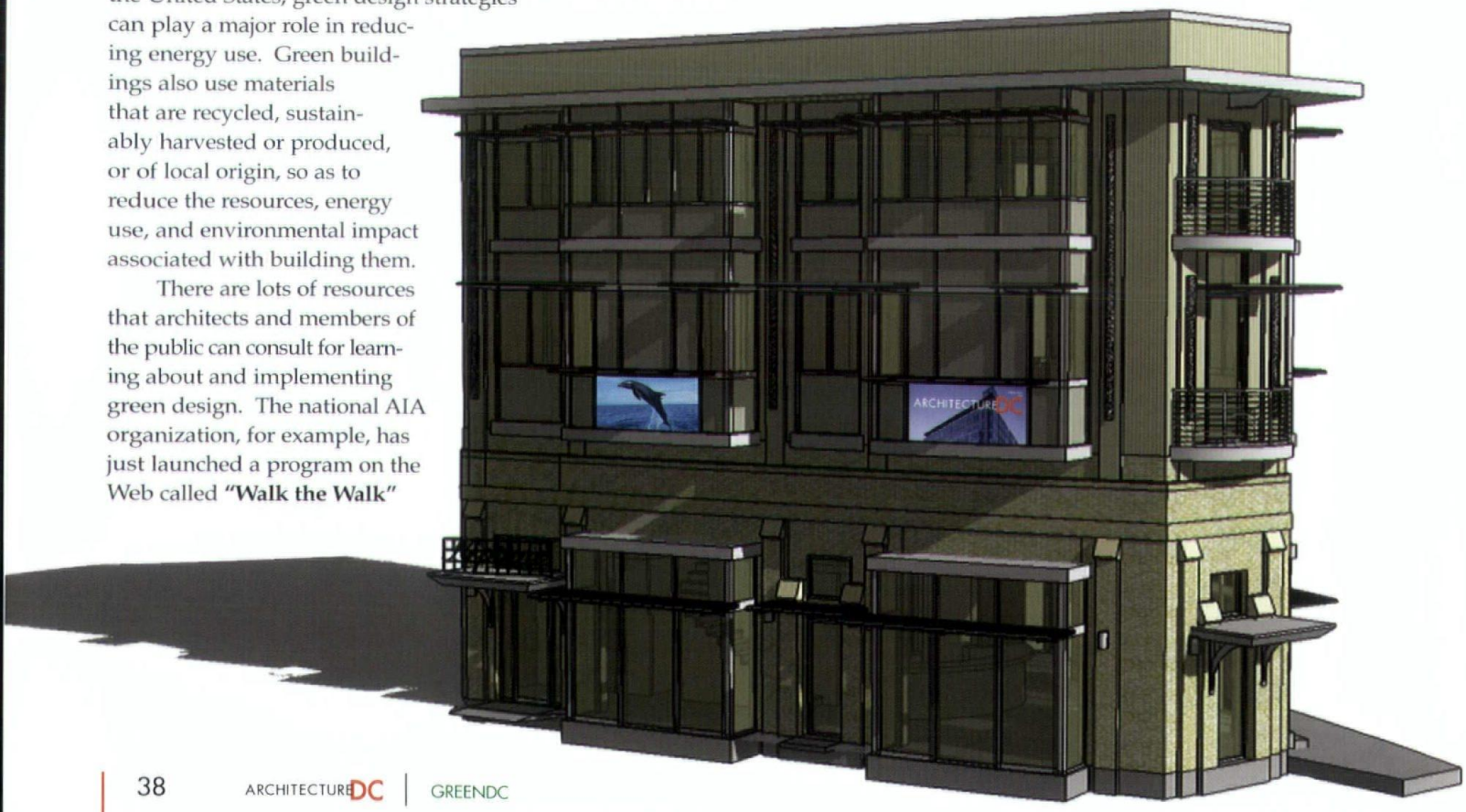
by Mary Fitch, AICP, Hon. AIA
Photos and images courtesy Michael Belisle Design

Avid readers of *ARCHITECTURE**DC*** will recall that our Spring 2007 issue was dedicated to sustainable (green) design. Publishing an occasional issue devoted to green design, however, is no longer sufficient to adequately track the growing number of developments in this area. And green design is something we should be thinking and reading about on a regular basis, not just once a year. So with this issue, we're inaugurating GreenDC, a regular section that will showcase interesting green design projects and products on a continuing basis.

Since this is the first edition of GreenDC, we thought it might be helpful to start by quickly reviewing the definition of what makes a building green. Buildings may be considered green or sustainable when they go beyond the minimum standards of the building code to incorporate features that produce significant reductions in energy and water use and life-cycle costs. Since buildings currently account for about 40 percent of energy usage in the United States, green design strategies can play a major role in reducing energy use. Green buildings also use materials that are recycled, sustainably harvested or produced, or of local origin, so as to reduce the resources, energy use, and environmental impact associated with building them.

There are lots of resources that architects and members of the public can consult for learning about and implementing green design. The national AIA organization, for example, has just launched a program on the Web called **"Walk the Walk"** that encourages architects to incorporate green design into their projects. The site also contains lots of resources for consumers—log on to http://www.aia.org/walkthewalk to learn more.

Often we describe green-design projects by using the term "LEED-certified." This stands for *Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design*, a green-design certification system developed by the United States Green Building Council (USGBC) that is used to evaluate and certify the expected level of environmental performance of a building throughout its life cycle. References to LEED silver, gold, or platinum certification indicate how the building measured up in relation to the long list of LEED evaluation criteria. Platinum is the highest level of certification, and we have one LEED platinum new building in DC—the Sidwell Friends Middle School, designed by Kieran Timberlake Associates, which was last featured in the Fall 2007 edition of *ARCHITECTURE**DC***.



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Uses per Cartridge	–	3,500	–
Cost per Cartridge	–	$55.00	–
Days of Operation per year	260	260	260
Total Uses per year	26,000	26,000	26,000
Annual Water Usage Comparison			
Water Use (gallons/day)	12.5	–	100
Water Use (gallons/year)	3,250	–	26,000
Cartridge Use (quantity/year)	–	7.42	–
Annual Operating Cost Comparison			
Annual Flush Valve Maintenance Costs	$20.00	–	$ 45.00
Cartridge Cost (year)	–	$408.10	–
Water/Sewer Cost	22.75	–	182.00
Total Annual Operating Cost	$42.75	$408.10	$227.00
Estimated Annual Savings Comparison			
Estimated New System Purchase Price	$ 600.00	$ 399.00	$ 450.00
Total Annual Operating Cost	42.75	408.10	227.00
First Year Cost	642.75	807.10	677.00
Ten Year Cost	$1,027.50	$4,480.00	$2,720.00

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Above and below: Existing building on Peripoint site.

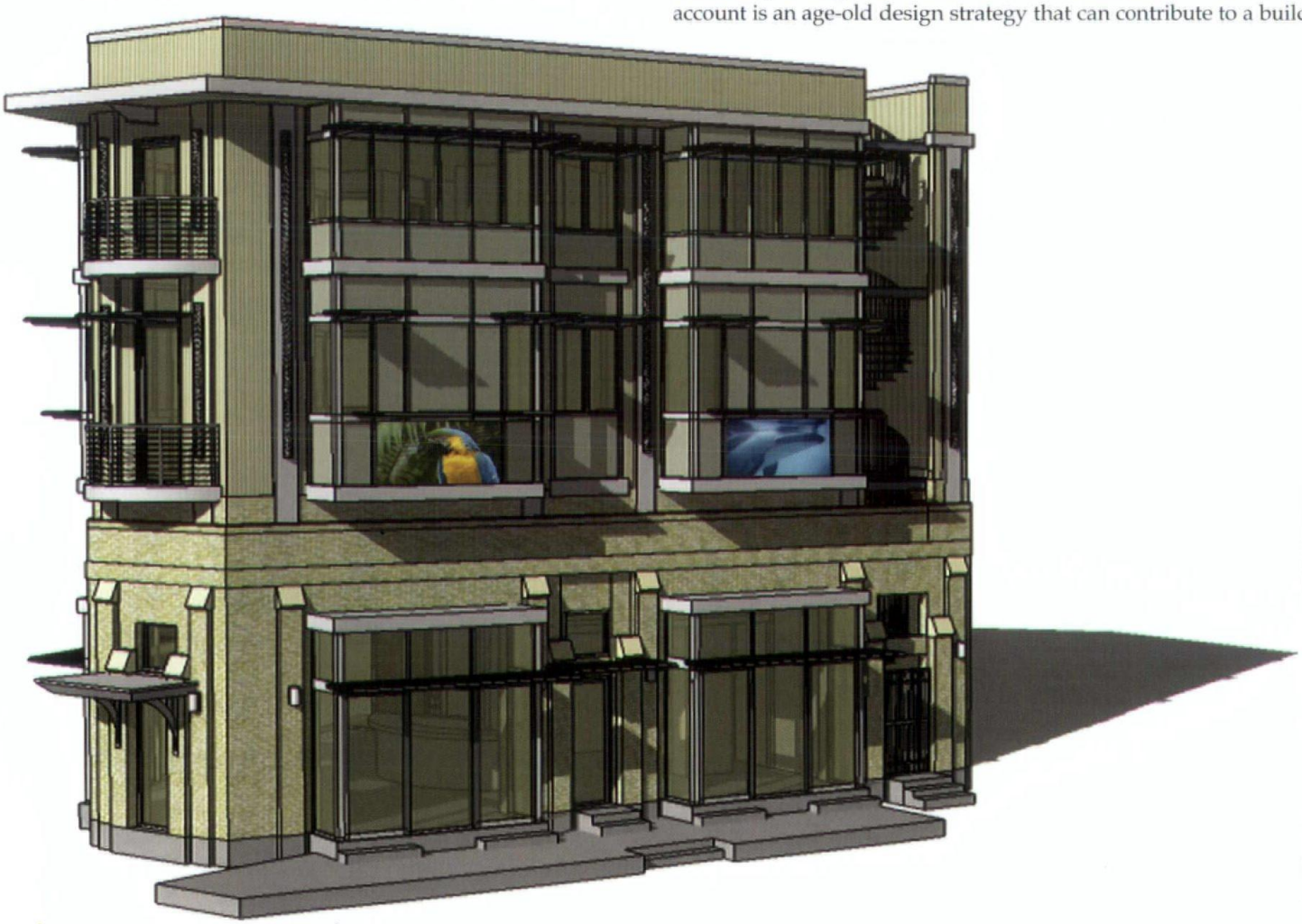
A growing number of AIA|DC's member architects have LEED AP ("Accredited Professional") after their names. This means they have passed a rigorous test and are qualified to use the USGBC's rating system. Note that buildings are "LEED certified," but people are "LEED accredited."

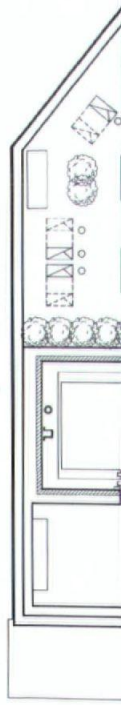
GreenDC's first featured project is located on a prominent boulevard in Bethesda that is passed by about two million cars each month, giving the project exposure to a wide audience. On a narrow corner at the junction of Wilson Lane, Old Georgetown Road, Arlington Road and St. Elmo Avenue, architect **Michael Belisle, AIA,** of the Betheda-based firm of **Michael Belisle Design,** has designed a three-story, mixed-use building with many sustainable-design features. The 5,426-square-foot building, which is scheduled for completion in June, is called "Peripoint" in reference to its prow-like location. The ground floor will house a restaurant, the second floor will be home to Gallery Neptune, and the third will be rented out as office space.

Recycling elements of an earlier building can be an important green-design feature, and the Peripoint building incorporates walls and stonework from the site's previous occupant, a one-story vacuum cleaner repair store. Belisle likes how the "stripped-down industrial vernacular" of the earlier building works with his two-story addition, which features corrugated aluminum and transparent and opaque glass. The building's interior finishes carry the "industrial vernacular" feel inside with exposed steel and polished concrete floors.

Another green-design strategy is to be located near mass transit, and the Peripoint building scores here as well, being just steps from the Bethesda Metro station. The building also incorporates bike racks and showers to encourage occupants to get to it by bicycle.

Incorporating features that take the sun and natural ventilation into account is an age-old design strategy that can contribute to a building's





green-design quotient. The Peripoint building incorporates solar screens positioned to block the sun in summer and allow it in during the winter, as well as operable windows—features that will make the building comfortable throughout the seasons, even on this exposed corner.

The building's heating and cooling system features a highly efficient *energy recovery* ventilator for exhausting stale air from the building and drawing fresh air in to replace it. The ventilator saves energy by using energy from air that is leaving the building to preheat or precool the new air being drawn in. During the summer, for example, warm air drawn in from the outside is cooled as it passes alongside a separate duct containing cool air that is leaving the building. By the time the new air reaches the building's interior, it has become much cooler, reducing the amount of energy required to bring it down to the desired temperature. In winter, the reverse happens, as warm air expelled from the building is used to prewarm the cold air being drawn in. Through this simple heat-exchange strategy, energy recovery ventilators can recover up to 70 percent of the energy from the outgoing air.

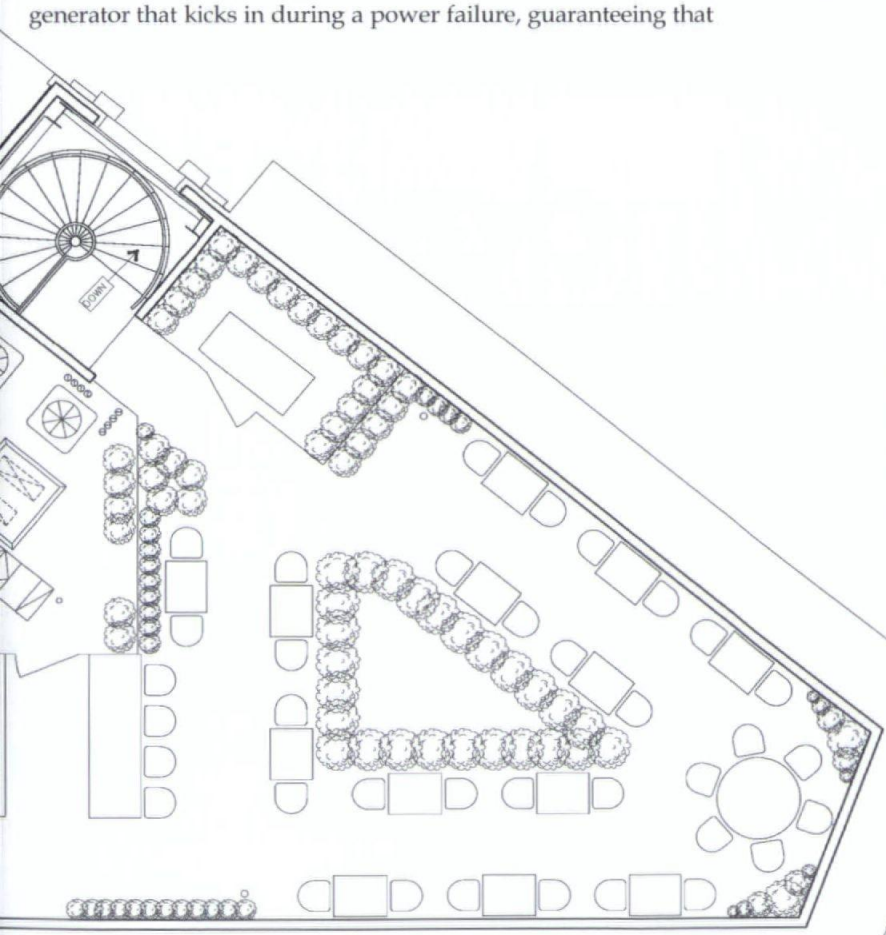
The bathrooms are also green: Belisle specified bathroom fixtures from Zurn, including toilets that use 20% less water than a standard fixture.

One of the project's most clever green-design features is its elevator-stairway combination, which combines sustainability with accessibility. As a general rule, elevators stop working when the power fails, which can then require physically challenged people to use the stairs to evacuate the building. For the Peripoint building, however, Belisle selected a KONE elevator that uses only one-fifth the electricity used by a standard elevator. He then added a stand-by generator that kicks in during a power failure, guaranteeing that the elevator can be used at all times by anyone who needs it. Having done this, Belisle then was able to design the building's emergency stair in a way that saves both space and energy—as a circular, exterior stair that takes up less room than a straight-running and because its outside the building does not have to be cooled, heated or continuously lit.

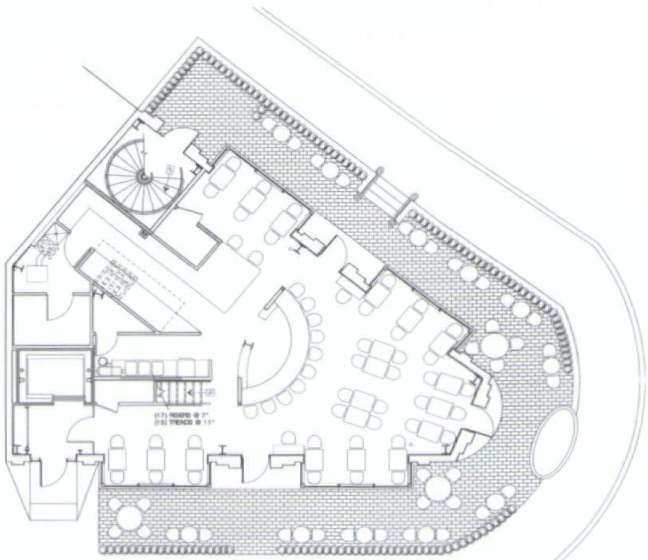
Having a green roof—a roof covered with plants—is another sustainable-design feature that can significantly reduce a building's heating and cooling costs, while also minimizing the "heat island" effect by which a structure reflects heat back into the atmosphere. Part of the Peripoint building's roof will be used as an outdoor deck for the restaurant; the other part will be a green roof.

The building will also feature an illuminated display system mounted on the second floor that employs highly energy-efficient light-emitting diodes (LEDs). The system will be used to display videoart and advertising for building tenants. Videoart is not yet a feature of Montgomery County's sign ordinance, so Belisle will be breaking new ground with this project. This display is intended to be a modest version of the 59th Minute project in New York's Times Square, which displays advertising throughout the day, and then, on the 59th minute of each hour, displays videoart from up-and-coming artists.

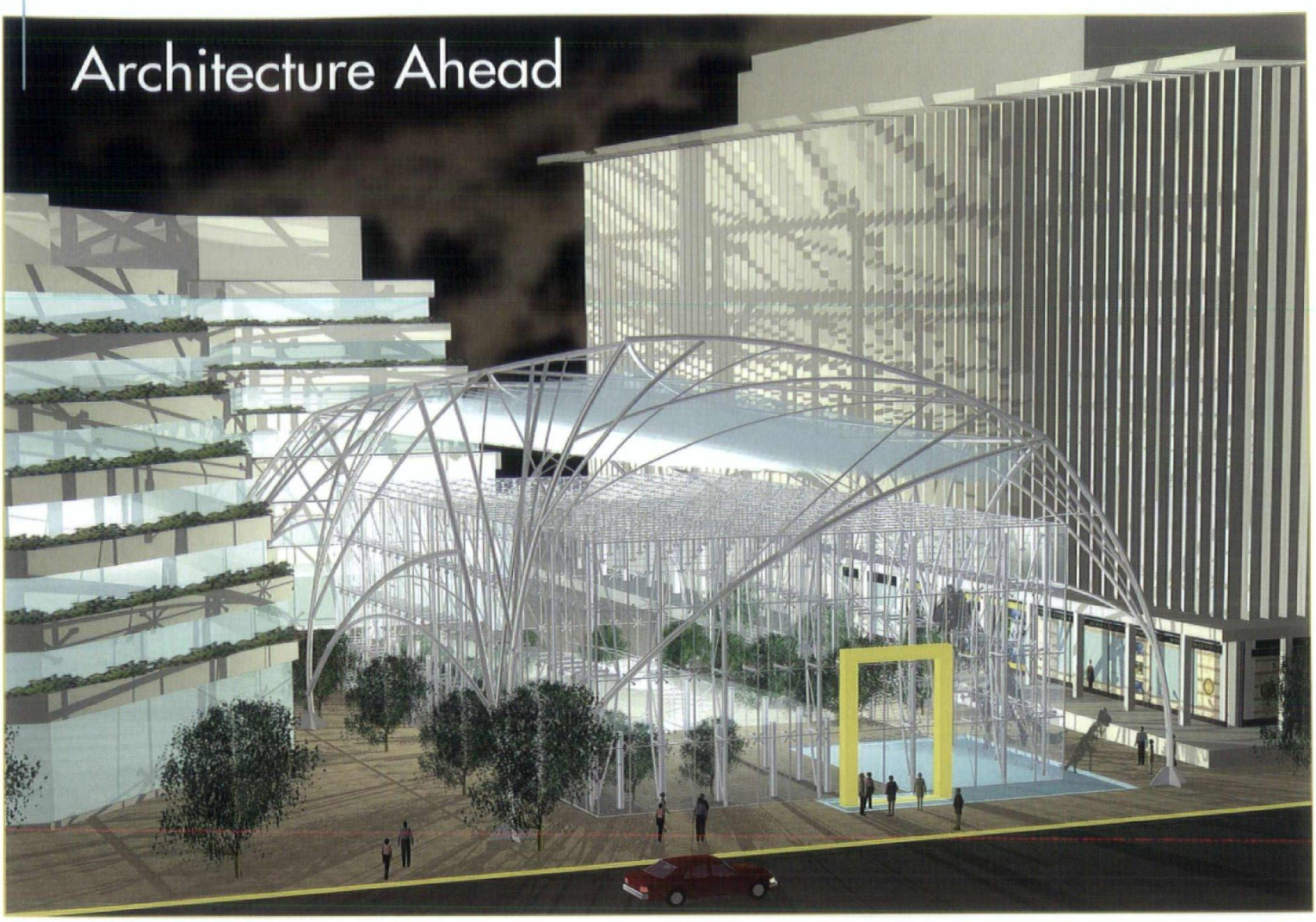
Belisle hopes the Peripoint building's elevator-stairway innovation and its other green-design features will earn it LEED silver certification. With such a prominent location, the building can convey to a large audience the message that green design is for everyone and is here to stay. As a consequence, this mixed-use project, though relatively small in size, could have an outsized impact on public awareness of green design.



Roof Plan



First floor plan



A New Window on the National Geographic Society

by G. Martin Moeller, Jr., Assoc. AIA

The first thing one notices in the rendering is that rectangular, yellow frame. The image immediately registers with the viewer—it is a window on the world, a portal to exotic places. It beckons the viewer to enter and discover fantastical landscapes, bizarre animals, and mysterious people whose faces bespeak unknown dreams, struggles, and triumphs.

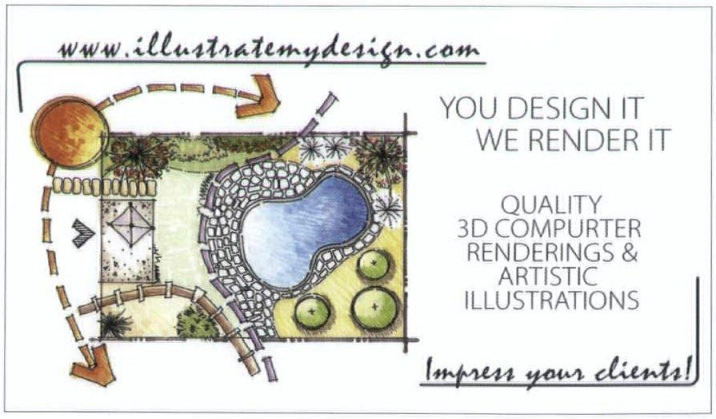
The yellow frame is, of course, the logo of the National Geographic Society, and it is so familiar because it has graced the cover of the organization's famous and ubiquitous magazine for nearly a century. In the rendering, the frame from the magazine cover has been translated into a literal portal—as the entrance to a proposed new structure designed by **Travis Price, AIA** that would serve as a much-needed orientation space for the society's Explorers Hall exhibition facility.

Price's diaphanous cage was actually not designed in response to a direct request from National Geographic. He had been hired to produce a master plan for the organization's pleasant but tightly packed and architecturally disparate

campus not far from Dupont Circle. As part of that charge, he designed a renovation of the existing Explorers Hall (2004), creating a new lobby and a series of eye-catching, street-facing displays intended to draw visitors into the otherwise rather anonymous complex. Not content to stop there, however, Price took it upon himself to conceive of a bold, new structure that he felt was needed in order to give the complex a stronger architectural identity. When he presented the design to the organization's leaders, they were astonished and strongly intrigued by what they saw.

The new structure would be built on the site of the only large open space remaining on the National Geographic campus. By virtue of its transparency and the thinness of its structural elements, however, the proposed building would preserve much of the sense of openness that the site currently offers. The form of the building reflects a clever response to the challenge of mediating between the relatively tall tower to the west, designed by Edward Durrell Stone in the 1960s and marked by slender fins that provide strong vertical emphasis, and the stepped, ziggurat-like building to the east, designed by Skidmore, Owings & Merrill (SOM) in the 1980s and boasting an equally emphatic horizontality. Rather than pick a side in this battle of rectilinearity, Price opted to create a skeletal structure made of curving, irregularly spaced ribs. The informal, sculptural quality of this structure—the elements of which were inspired by the lines of latitude and longitude on a globe—succeeds in creating a signature form independent of, but complementary to, the Stone and SOM blocks. Suspended from this exoskeleton is a lightly structured and very simply detailed metal-and-glass box, which provides the actual enclosure from the elements even though it almost disappears from view. Thanks to insulating glass throughout and moveable fins along the roof, the interior space can be shielded from sunlight and heat when necessary, while photovoltaic panels will generate electricity.

The new space would be used for rotating exhibitions and, presumably, special events of many kinds. As of this writing, the project remains under active consideration but no specific timeline for its construction has been announced.



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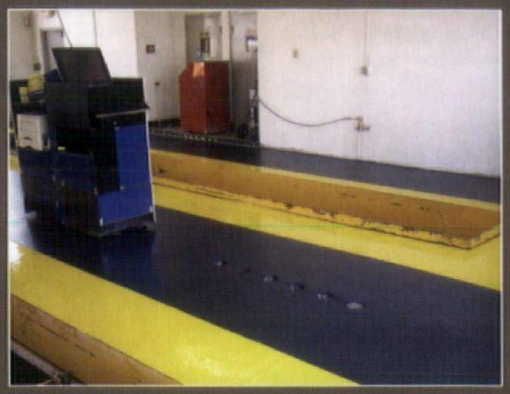
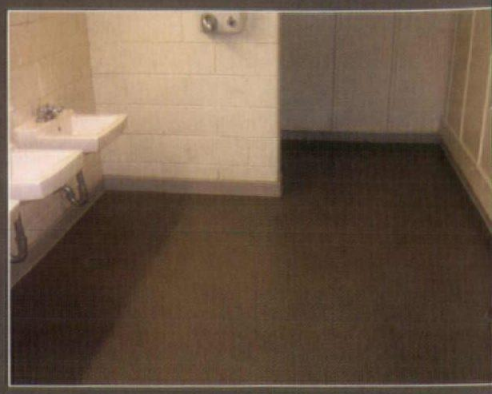

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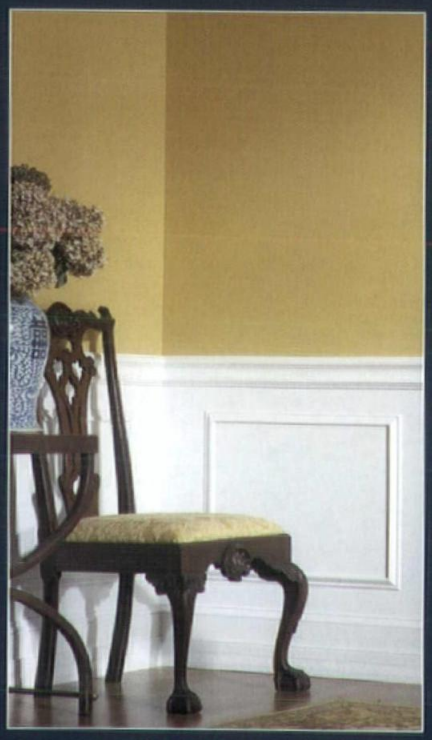

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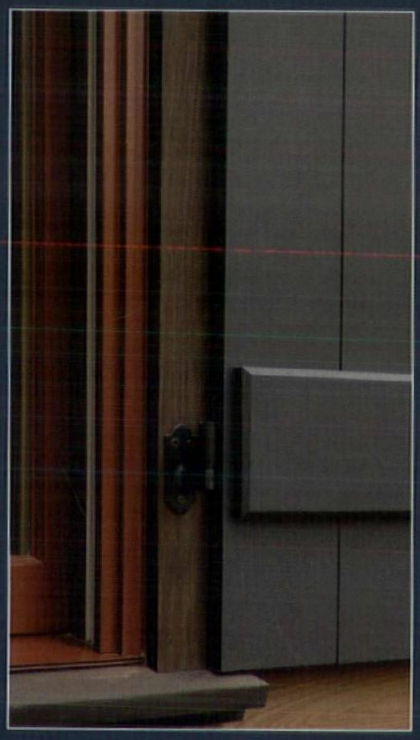

Weathered Red DCL 048 &
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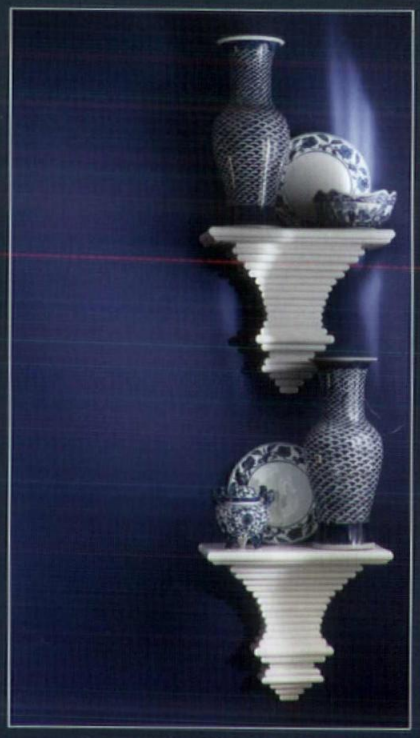

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